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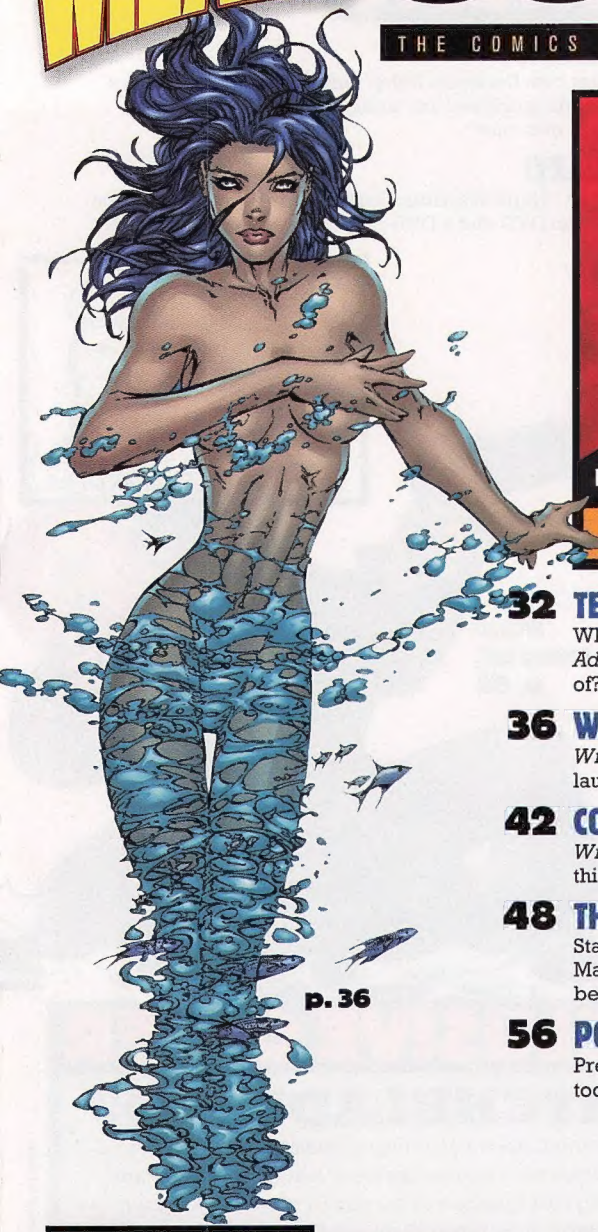

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Presenting the 25 most powerful people in comics today. **By the Wizard Staff**

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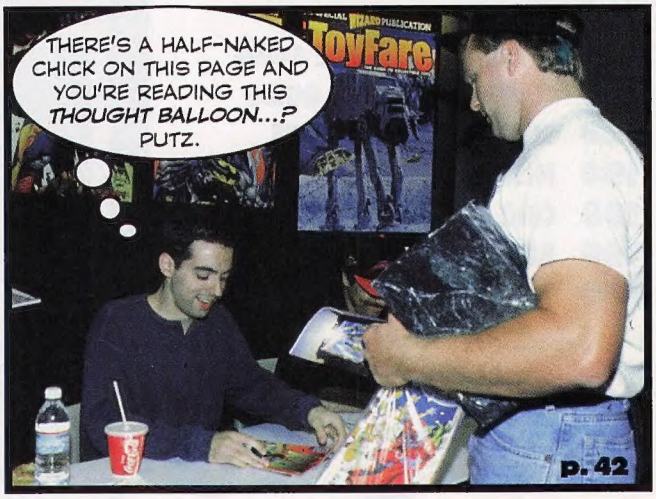
Fathom (left) was illustrated by Michael Turner and Joe Weems, and colored by J.D. Smith. Dive to **page 36** to peek inside Michael Turner s personal sketchbook, featuring his latest project, *Fathom*. **Spider-Man** was illustrated by Mike Wieringo and colored by Liquid Graphics. Swing on over to **page 48** to see what Howard Mackie, the sole Spidey writer come November, has planned for everyone s favorite web-slinger.



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Win Viz's entire "Night Warriors: Darkstalkers' Revenge The Animated Series" on DVD and a DVD player to watch them on! Suh-weeeet!!!

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COOL STUFF THROUGH THE MAIL

EXCLUSIVE OFFER

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Mesmerizin'! Here's your *only* chance to get the exclusive *Witchblade* #500 comic. The book features a Witchblade-wielding Sara Pezzini and her son (!) in a tale 20 years in the future, written by David Wohl and Christina Z., with art by Randy Green! Conjure yourself to **page 80**.

IRON MAN PHOTO BY PAUL SCHRADLER

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"HOLD ON, GAREB! IT'S GONNA BLOW!"

CREATIVE CONTROL

This month continues our three-part "Comics are Cool" event, focusing on creators. The 25 people spotlighted in our mega-feature this month truly have made a difference. We ranked the top 25 people who have led comics to branch out in new directions, were innovative in both creativity and style, and had a knack for marketing and promoting their products.

The list comprises both business types and creative types, and even creators who have turned into business types. What we looked for in the "Power 25" were those individuals who have been able to use their resources to further the advancement of the comic book industry as an art form, and also as new media, especially toys, movies and TV. We did not want this list to be "who's a better artist or writer," or "who would win in a fight." All these people in their own way helped to make this the comeback year for comics.

Of course, there are many more people behind the scenes who have contributed greatly to pushing this industry to greater quality, and we praise their efforts as well. I'm sure we all have our favorites and I look forward to hearing yours.

As for the rest of this issue, we've got some other great stuff. There's a sneak peek inside Michael Turner's sketchbook, which features all sorts of notes and sketches on his newest creation Fathom! We also interview Howard Mackie, who will soon be the sole writer behind Spider-Man. Then, to help you get through all of this summer's big comic conventions, we offer a comic book convention survival guide. And finally, we take a look at Kitchen Sink Press' new *The Spirit: The New Adventures* comic which has some very big names involved. You should definitely check it out.

Enjoy!

Gareb S. Shamus

P.S. To all the people who did not make this year's list, you were #26. I swear!

PHOTO: PAUL SCHRADER

MASTHEAD

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A useful guide to training your dog to do all the things you don't want to do.

Just like humans, some dogs are smarter than others. (In fact, some dogs are smarter than some humans. You can probably think of a few examples yourself.) So hang in there if your pet turns out to be some sort of canine lamebrain.

LESSON 1: GARBAGE REMOVAL

COMMAND	ACTION
"Grab"	Instruct your canine to grab the bag at its opening to avoid a major tear.
"Carry"	Then, be sure he lifts and carries it off the ground. Don't drag the bag.
"Deposit"	Finally, it needs to go "in" the can. Not "on" it. Not "near" it. Inside it.

If your canine just can't figure it out, try putting the bag in your mouth and demonstrating it for him. **HINT:** this is best done when no one else is watching.

LESSON 2: TIDYING UP

After garbage removal this should be a snap. Just be sure your pooch knows the difference between a garbage can and a clothes hamper. If not, you could end up short of underwear.

ADVANCED LESSON: AUTO CLEANING

This should be attempted with hounds of exceptional intellect and dexterity, only. If your canine is a bit of a putz, don't even waste the time trying to teach this one.

Bonus Reward (x2)

LESSON 3: PULLING WEEDS

Weed "YES"

Flower "NO"

Dogs don't have a green thumb (heck, they don't have a thumb of any kind). Therefore, you need to help them distinguish between a weed and a flower. If you don't, well, let's put it this way, your mutt won't be the only one living in the proverbial doghouse.

TRAINING TIPS

1 Reward a task well done:

- A). A few of these are ample reward for first-time success.
- B). Give this tasty morsel when he consistently comes through.
- C). Lay this on him when he does a chore without being asked.
- D). Just kidding.

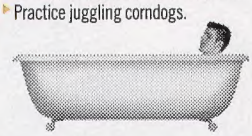
2 Provide frequent rest periods:

Keep in mind that every year of your life equals seven dog years. So your hound is working some really long hours:

Chore	Your time	In dog years
Empty garbage	4 min.	28 min.
Tidy up room	45 min.	5 hrs., 15 min.
Pulling weeds	4 hrs.	1 day, 4 hrs.

3 Relax and enjoy your free time:

- Sit in the bathtub and get all wrinkly.
- Prove the existence of extraterrestrial life.
- Practice juggling corndogs.



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DISCLAIMER - In the event you don't own a dog we do not recommend substituting any of the following: a hamster (too small), a turtle (too slow), a rattlesnake (too poisonous), a dinosaur (too extinct). However, if you have a little brother, all of the ideas shown here definitely do apply.

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MAGIC WORDS

KEVIN SMITH EATS CHEESE... GAMBIT EATS PEZ... WOLVERINE'S INGROWN TOENAIL!

Lotsa cool stuff to get to. No time to talk. Get readin'. Meet you between the letters.

Hey Jim,

I've got a few questions about Kevin Smith.

1) What's his favorite type of cheese?

2) What's his next movie? Will it continue the "Jersey Trilogy"? Will Jason Lee be in it?

3) Of the three films he's made, which is his favorite?

Until next time, power to the people and screw "The Man!"

Matt Hart
Campbellton, Newfoundland, Canada

I have a few answers about Kevin Smith, directly from the (lowercase m) man himself.

1) Kevin says, "Kraft Low-Fat American Cheese Food Product. In slices. God only knows what's in it, but you can pull a Homer Simpson and eat the whole package if you want to, and at least it's not fattening."

2) Smith says his next cinematic offering, "Dogma," is "a supernatural comedy road movie featuring Jay, Silent Bob, angels, demons and God. It stands alone, but there are plenty of references to his other movies, and a trip from Illinois to New Jersey. So it's kind of peripheral to the Jersey stuff." Smith also promises lots of comic stuff. "I think the screenplay reads like a comic. It's closely related to Matt Wagner's *Mage*, and there's also stuff inspired by Alan Moore and Neil Gaiman in there." And Jason Lee is in it.

3) Smith: "Thus far, 'Chasing Amy.' It was a very small and intimate movie, and we had really tanked with the previous film, 'Mallrats.' We needed to come back and prove ourselves, and we did."

"Power to the people?" Boy, you're gonna love this month's "Bunny Award" letter.

Dear Wizard,

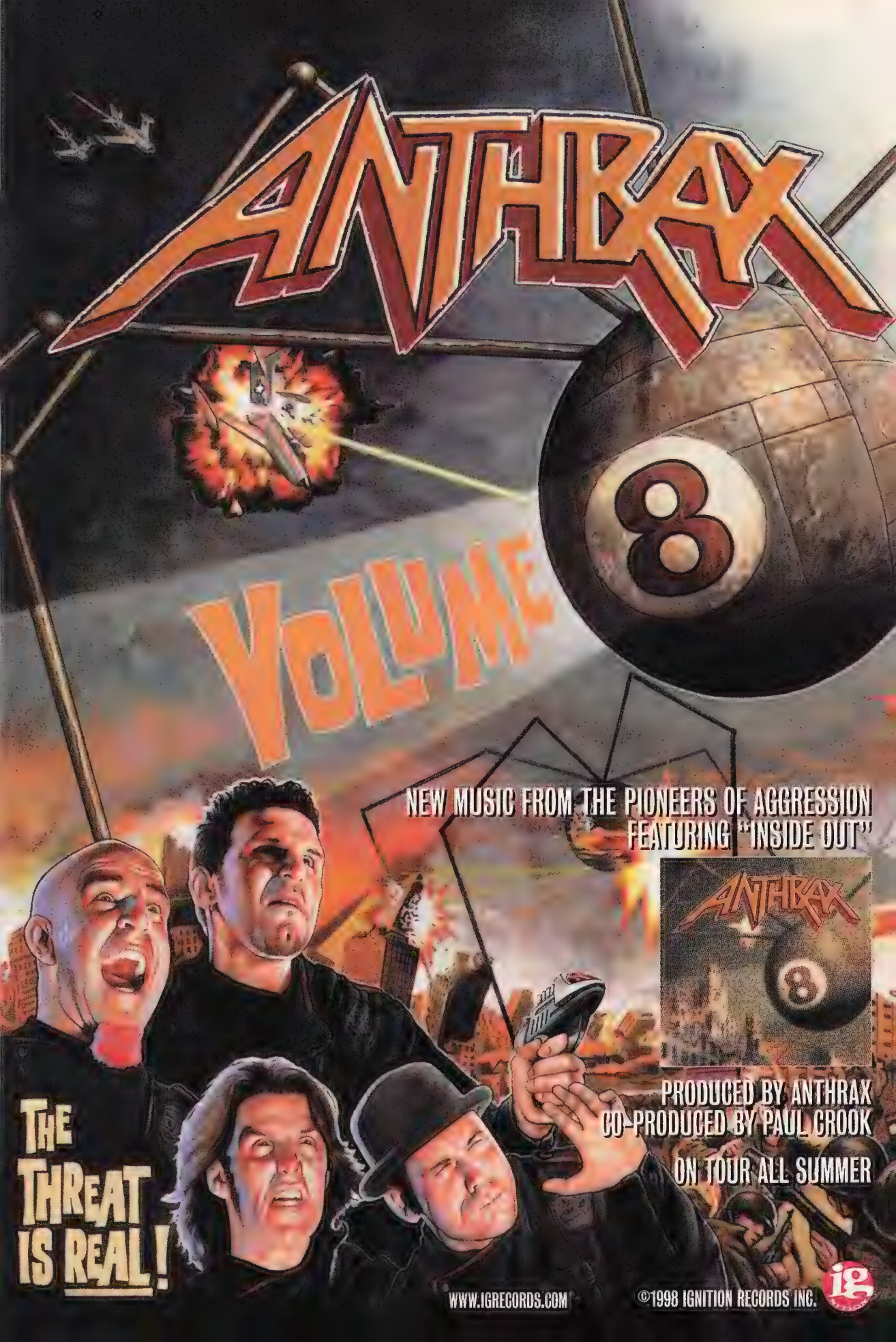
If "DC" stands for "Detective Comics," doesn't that mean that people are saying "Detective Comics Comics" when they say "DC Comics"?

Scott Lafreniere
Pembroke, Ontario, Canada
aa356@valleynet.on.ca

Since we already had Kevin Smith on the phone and since he's such a big comic geek, we figured we'd ask him. "Yes, it does," Smith says. "But if we simply call it 'DC' instead of 'DC Comics,' people might get it confused with Washington, D.C. Then the next time DC starts a new title, some nutball in a breakaway Russian republic hears about a 'DC launch' and decides to strike first and lets his missiles fly...it's all over. It may take an extra word to say 'DC Comics,' but it's worth it."

Hello, Jim,

1) Can Wolverine's healing factor cure any of the following: hemorrhoids, tooth decay, ingrown toenails, pimples, jock itch?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BUNNY AWARD

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Jim takes his favorite letter of the month and spotlights it here. There's no logic attached to this, nor is there a prize.

Mr. McLauchlin:

I couldn't help but notice your frequent rants about the "stinking *petit bourgeois*" and "The Man." This, combined with your global reputation as a master kidney puncher, leads me to believe that you fancy yourself some kind of radical.

It is clear that you intend to use your position of power at *Wizard* to influence impressionable youth and incite a general class uprising. But your plan to make comics the new "opiate of the masses" is severely compromised by your attempt to shock readers from their comfortable worldviews.

However, now that your agenda has been revealed by this letter, I am confident you will be ousted and replaced with someone much less articulate and aware. Any final words to offer in your defense before you are transferred to an appropriate re-education camp?

Bill Wright
Brookings, SD

Just two: Up yours.

The comic agenda is not a quiet one. It's a loud one. The integration of comics into the mainstream requires movement. It demands action. It orders certain vanguards of the people to move the cause forward. Yea, verily—it commands that people be shaken from their comfortable views!

If I am one of these vanguards, I welcome the role. If I am known by my words, then so be it. For you, too, are known by your words. And when the revolution comes, you will be the first up against the wall.

Hot damn, I just looove a little revolution-speak! Gets the blood pumpin'! Power to the people!

2) How does *Wizard* come up with prices for every comic listed?

Zeb Erickson
Missoula, MT
Flash32878@aol.com

1) All of 'em. But probably the toughest would be the ingrown toenails. I would guess that Wolvie's healing factor reacts to injury and disease, and would not go after an ingrown toenail until it caused an infection or got harmful, at which point it would already be developed. The rest? He'd fight 'em off so fast, it'd be like he never had 'em.

2) Easy. We toss chicken bones into a pot of boiling blood and wait until they rise to the top and show us the numbers.

Dear Jim,

I have questions. Please answer seriously.

1) Who comes up with all the witty humor you guys display in your magazine?

2) Why do you hate France?

3) I once saw a "Doctor No" comic based on the James Bond movie. When was this printed?

4) How do you determine the "Top 10 Heroes & Villains" every month?

Aaron Doyle
Silver Spring, MD

I have answers. Beyond that, I make no promises.

1) A witty humor mail-order service. Every month, we send $11.99 to a post office box in Massapequa, N.Y., and we get 10 witty one-liners. What a bargain!

2) Because everyone there is snotty, the women don't shave their armpits and every time there's a war the whole nation folds up like a card table.

3) DC's *Showcase* #43, published in April 1963, presents comics' only "Doctor No" story.

4) Easy. We toss chicken bones into a pot of boiling blood and wait until they rise to the top and spell out the appropriate names.

Dear Great Jimbini,

Where does Joe Kelly come up with Deadpool's kick-ass one-liners? What inspires him? Does he just know a lot of jokes? I just gots ta know!

Erik Spencer
Royal Oak, MI

I just gots ta tell ya!

Kelly says, "I collect them over time. Every time I hear a good 'yo mama' joke or a good dis or a good snap, I write it down. Aside from that, I make most of them up myself. I guess it's just the product of having spent too much time watching Bugs Bunny and Robin Williams. Well, that and the beer."

Good thing he hasn't found out about our witty one-liner mail-order service yet.

Dear Wizard,

What does X-Man Maggott mean when he says "ag," "stoepkakker" or "struesbob?" And are all these words South African slang?

Carlin Mitchell
ANNON29@aol.com

Since we already had Joe Kelly on the phone, we figured we'd ask him. "'Ag!' just means 'Hey!'" he says. "It's your basic exclamation. 'Stoepkakker' literally translates to 'stupid little dog that sits on the front porch.'

BUNNY PHOTO: PAUL SCHRADI

HEY! IT'S PEN PALS...

Send your name, address, age, sex and three favorite titles to Pen Pals, c/o the "Magic Words" address at the end of this column (put your age on the envelope). The only way to get your Internet address listed instead is to post your info in the Pen Pals board on America Online's "Wizard World" forum (keyword: Wizard; look in the Wizard Bulletin Board, under Message Boards). Pre-'97 entrants: Please resend your entries.

It's a term of derision. Instead of Maggott calling someone an idiot or a dolt, he'd call them a stoepkakker. And 'struesbob' means 'It's true' or 'I'm dead serious.'" All these neat little catch-phrases spouted by the South African hero Maggott are indeed South African slang terms that Kelly found on the "cyberbraai" Website at mainstreet.t5.com/cyber-back.htm.

Dear Wizard,

Hey! Maggot's name is now "Maggott." With two "t's." But I'm sure I remember in his first appearance, he was "Maggot." With one "t." Why the change? Was "Maggot" already copyrighted?

Dan Boczarski
Chicago, IL
RyuDOA@aol.com

Since we already had Joe Kelly on the phone, we figured we'd ask him. Even though the slimy little real-life creature known as the "maggot" has one "t," Maggott the X-Man has two because "the extra consonant makes him extra-scary. Either that or it was originally a typo. But I'm sticking to the 'scary' explanation."

Simple answer: He's always been and always will be "Maggott." Any reference to "Maggot" is a typo.

After these last two letters, I realize I'm using way too many quote marks this month.

Dear Wizard,

What did Mr. Sinister give Gambit in that little metal canister in *Uncanny X-Men* #350? Not knowing is really buggin' me!

Jordon Hernandez
GHerna6881@aol.com

Since we were sick of talking to Joe Kelly, we called Steven T. Seagle, the man who wrote that issue. Seagle sez Marvel has slapped a gag order on him as far as revealing that little tidbit. "All I'm allowed to say right now is that it's Pez," he says. "As to the flavor of said Pez, I think it's cherry, but I really can't say. Yet."

Dear Jim,

The recent DC/Vertigo *Uncle Sam* mini-series was the best! Are there plans for more *Uncle Sam*?

Justin Busch
justin1382@hotmail.com

Nothing on the horizon yet, and the ball looks to be in DC's hands. According to Alex Ross, who painted and co-wrote the series, "If Vertigo sees future possibilities, I'd be happy to participate, and I'm sure my collaborator, Steve Darnall, would too."

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Likes: *Generation X, Cable, X-Men*

Dear Jim,

How do writers at Marvel check continuity? Let's say you're a new writer assigned to a Spider-Man title and you wanted to find out how and where Spidey and Mary Jane first met. Would you just ask around the office until you find someone who knows? Does Marvel have some really huge library stashed away somewhere?

William B. Bibbiani
Pasadena, CA

Both, actually. Following your Spider-Man example, Spider-writer Howard Mackie tells us, "My first line of defense is always the editors. Glenn Greenberg is an overwhelming fountain of Spider-lore. And Ralph Macchio has a complete set of Marvel comics. But if I need it—and I do need references, because I'm not one of those guys with a photographic memory—Marvel has a reference library of all their books in bound volumes."

Dear All-Knowing Jim,

Why is the Joker never named with a "real" name? Am I missing some incredible symbolism in that? Or is there just no particular reason behind the fact that we don't know who he is?

Livio Ramondelli
State College, PA

The human utility belt himself, Batman group editor and ace Bat-historian Dennis O'Neil, says: "It's kinda symbolic. The Joker represents chaos and extremes of insanity that transcend the human. We think the representation is stronger if he has no other identity. We've never given him a name, and that policy will stand for the time being."

Not that some haven't tried. "I've had to correct some writers who tried to give him the name from the first 'Batman' movie," O'Neil adds. "But he is emphatically not Jack Napier."

Dear Jim,

Whatever happened to Steve Ditko after he left Spider-Man?

Meredith Mincey
hlkell@oz.sunflower.org

Although he never did anything as commercial as Spidey after leaving Marvel, artist Steve Ditko kept busy. He moved to Tower Comics, Charlton Comics, and Wally Wood's *witzend* magazine, where he created such characters as The Question and Mr. A. He later moved on to DC, where he worked on Beware the Creeper, and, much later, back to Marvel to create Speedball.

Ditko has always been reclusive, and his reasons behind leaving Spider-Man have never been fully explained, although many believe it had to do with the Green Goblin's identity. Ditko's last issue was *Amazing Spider-Man* #38 (July, 1966), and the Goblin was revealed to be Norman Osborn in *ASM* #39. The popular conception has it that Ditko wanted the Goblin to be someone random who had no connection to Spidey, and the decision to make him a pre-existing supporting character led to Ditko's departure.

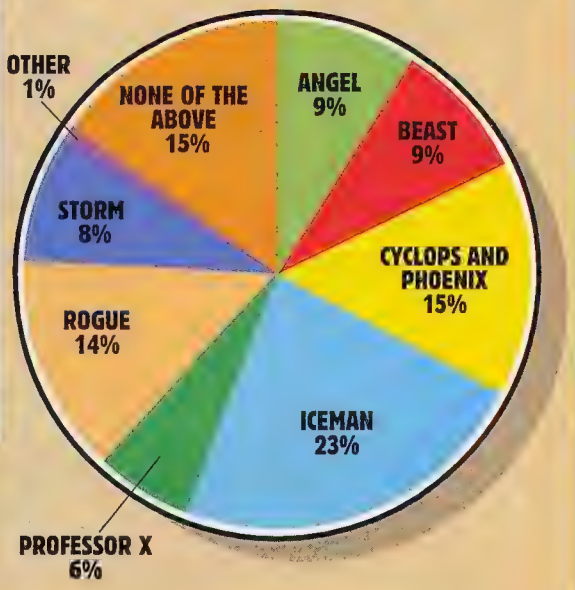
Dear Jim,

In Disney's *Little Mermaid* #3, a story called "Guppy Love" was

ONLINE QUESTION OF THE MONTH

SURVEY SAYS

WHICH X-MAN SHOULD GET A COMIC OF HIS OWN?



Wolverine has his own monthly title. Cable's got his own book, too. The rumor mill even has Gambit joining them later this year. And just what do fans clamor for next? An Iceman series?!? We're kinda baffled by the popularity of this frosty cold sensation, but hey, the fans like him. "He's cool...in more than one way," said one respondent in our America Online poll. "He's the young, relatable one."

Youth usually sells, but right now market saturation might hurt the chances of any new X-book. *Wizard* noted a large fan backlash to this question. Fifteen percent voted for "none of the above." "Like there aren't enough X-Men titles?" responded one annoyed fan. "Isn't Marvel canceling *Excalibur* for that reason? This market doesn't need more X-books."

Perhaps, but more fans still say Iceman.

■ MATTHEW SENREICH

CLINT HOSKINS
Age: 10 Sex: Male
2617 West Indiana St.
Evansville, IN 47712
Likes: *Uncanny X-Men, Wolverine, Amazing Spider-Man*

JAMES COCHET
Age: 20 Sex: Male
47, Rue J-R. Thorelle
92340 Bour-La-Reine, France
Likes: *Wolverine*, most manga, *Captain America*

EFRAIN J. MARTINEZ
Age: 19 Sex: Male
34 Amherst St.
Holyoke, MA 01040
Likes: X-titles, anything by Alex Ross, *The Spirit*

JERRON ROBINSON
Age: 17 Sex: Male
418 S. Sheridan St.
South Bend, IN 46619
Likes: *Uncanny X-Men, X-Men, Spider-Man*

RYAN COLEMAN, 15/M
AKIRA62@aol.com
Akira, Ani Mayhem, manga

RYAN SOURS, 12/M
TopDawggy2@aol.com
Spawn, Dragonball Z, K. Busek titles

HÉLIAS JAFFE, 18/M
Scummy4@aol.com
Slave Pit Funnies (featuring GWAR)

JAIME L. MEDINA, 20/M
dark_logan@hotmail.com
Darkness, Witchblade, X-titles

JAE ALVAREZ, 21/M
wildcard@surfshop.net.ph
Deadpool, Wolverine, Spider-Man

SCOTT AMARAL, 15/M
scott1253@juno.com
Spawn, Spidey, Venom

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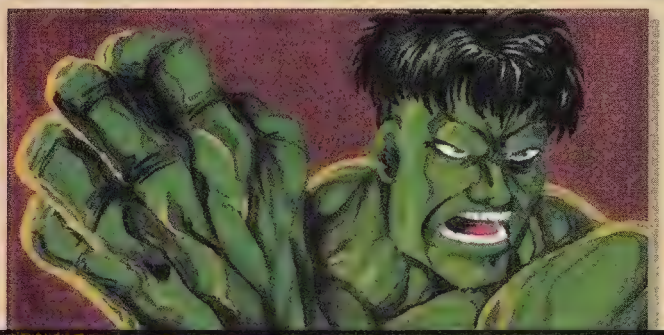
LETTER ART

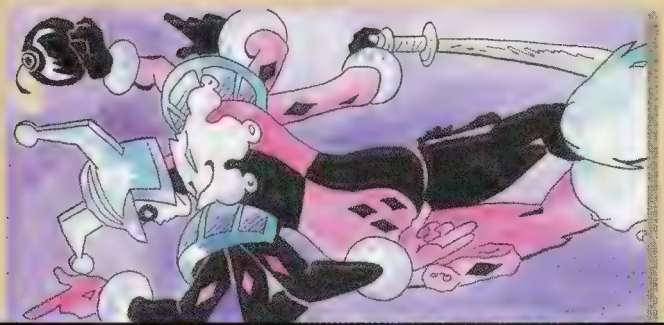
Each fan who has letter art printed this month will receive a copy of *Madman* #11 autographed by creator Mike Allred, plus a copy of this issue of *Wizard* signed by the entire *Wizard* creative staff! The talented creator of this month's best envelope also scores an original page of Madman art by Allred! (Thanks for all bountiful booty, Mike!) ARTISTS: PLEASE INCLUDE A CLEARLY PRINTED RETURN ADDRESS AND A LIST OF CHARACTERS DEPICTED ON THE BACK OF YOUR ENVELOPE. GOOD LUCK!

ENVELOPE OF THE MONTH.....THE PRIZE

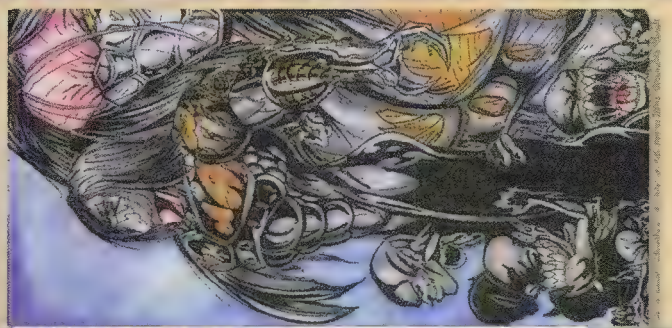
SCUD PARK Ryan M. Aspy Waterford, Mi.



HULK Donny G. Kusuma Surabaya, Indonesia



SPIRAL-QUINN Bryan Hollingsworth Newark, Ca.



THE DARKNESS Matthew Morgan San Diego, Ca.

written by Peter David. Would this be the same Peter David who writes *Supergirl*?

Brian Whiteman
Madoc, Ontario, Canada

It would. David himself says, "Not only did I write issue #3 of *Little Mermaid*, but I also wrote #1, #2 and #4. I should really pull out those old issues and read them to my 6-year-old daughter, Ariel [named after the lead character in the film, "The Little Mermaid," 'natch]."

Dear Wizard,

Everybody knows Spider-Man has the proportionate strength of a spider. He can lift tons. My question: Can Spider-Man crush his head with his own hands?

Chris Hample
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Perhaps surprisingly, no. And no less an expert than Dr. Robert Santopietro of St. Vincent's Hospital in New York City confirms this. "I would assume Spider-Man also has a stronger skeletal structure to go along with his strength," says the good doctor. I've seen him take punches from the Hulk. So if everything remains proportionate, his skull would still be much stronger than his hands. If he tried, his hands would break before his skull would."

And here I bet you were expecting some goofball answer.

No goofball answer? I musta ran out of my monthly allotment of witty one-liners. Quick, somebody get me a money order for $11.99, plus shipping and handling, so we can stay in business. Until next month, I remain...

Someone once called Jim McLauchlin a "supernatural rockin' galoot." He thinks that suits him just fine.

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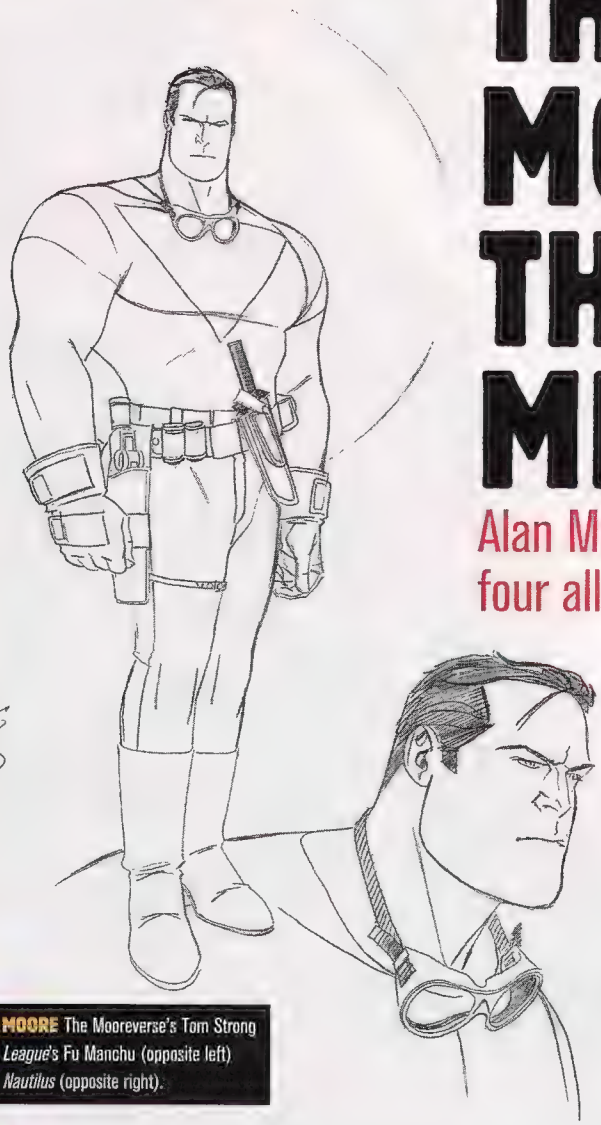
THE MOORE THE MERRIER

Alan Moore inks deal to produce four all-new books for WildStorm



MOORE & MOORE The Mooreverse's Tom Strong (this page), *League*'s Fu Manchu (opposite left) and Nemo's *Nautilus* (opposite right).

Alan Moore is playing god. For his own superhero universe, that is.

Moore—the former writer of *Supreme* and *Youngblood*—has signed a deal with **WildStorm Productions** to produce an all-new line of four books beginning in January 1999. The line launches with ***Tom Strong***, followed in subsequent months by ***Promethea***, ***Top Ten*** and ***Tomorrow Comics***.

Moore found his new home at WildStorm when Awesome Entertainment encountered financial difficulties. "There was a certain amount energy at Awesome that I was pleased with, but they had things to work out," Moore said. "I'd like to carry on that energy and salvage what we can of the buzz we were getting on our work without carrying over ideas or characters."

"We wanted to give him the opportunity to be completely free and I think Alan running free takes it one level up," WildStorm Editor-in-Chief Scott Dunbier said.

The new line of Moore books will remain outside WildStorm's other subsections including the main WildStorm Universe, Homage Comics and Cliffhanger. And while this "Mooreverse" doesn't have an official name yet, it will be its own cohesive, continuity-based universe. "I want it to be mostly self-contained, but if the need occurs, I'm writing [it] so that the characters can connect," Moore explained.

In addition to the all-new line, Moore will publish an unrelated fifth book, ***The League of Extraordinary Gentleman***, through WildStorm's Homage line scheduled for December 1998.

Though details of the new books are sparse, here is a brief description of the upcoming titles:

The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen

(penciled by Kevin O'Neil)

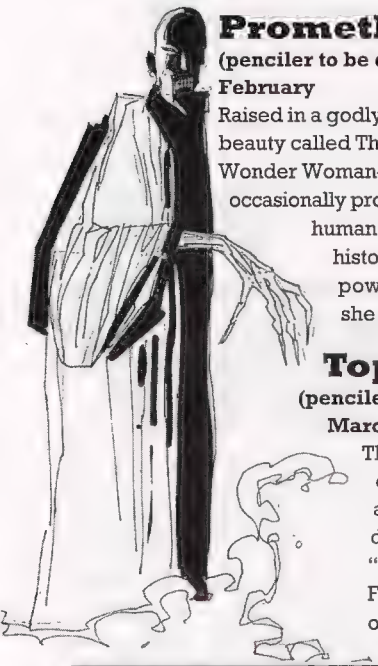
December

What happens when the **Invisible Man**, **Sherlock Holmes**, **Mr. Hyde**, **Captain Nemo** and other characters from 19th century literature unite and are transformed into superheroes of that time period? It's a Victorian age adventure in a six-issue mini-series.

Tom Strong

(penciled by Chris Sprouse)
January

Tom Strong is the Mooreverse's Reed Richards. The super-intelligent Strong possesses an incredible amount of scientific knowledge, creating technological achievements such as futuristic robots and flying machines. From his home on the deserted island Attabar Teru, he visits Millennium City where many of his adventures take place.



Promethea

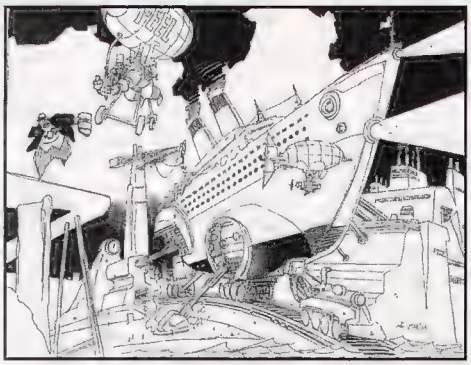
(penciler to be determined)
February

Raised in a godly world of art and beauty called The Immateria, the Wonder Woman-like **Promethea** occasionally projects herself into human lives throughout history and offers her powers to the souls she bonds with.

Top Ten

(penciled by Gene Ha)
March

The futuristic city of Neopolis has adopted an interdimensional "Private Police Force" comprised of superheroes from all different universes. Precinct 10 is the setting for ***Top Ten*** as the book features 10 different (five male, five female) superheroic characters.



Tomorrow Comics

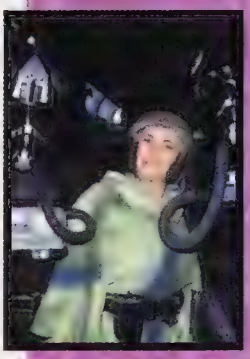
(penciled by Rick Veitch, Kevin Nowlan and Melinda Gebbie)
April

Tomorrow Comics is an anthology book comprised of three eight-page stories. The first three are:

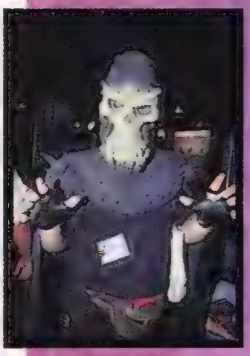
"Greyshirt" (art by Veitch) stars a Batman/The Spirit-like character with a supernatural angle.

"Jack B. Quick" (art by Nowlan) features a boy inventor searching for answers of childhood questions such as, "Could you build an elevator to the moon?"

"Cobweb" (art by Gebbie) will center around a female millionaire Green Hornet-like character who plays detective in her spare time. ■ **MATTHEW SENREICH**



Actress Carrie Fisher pulls a Margot Kidder. "In MY prequel script, Leia is held captive by well-oiled, TIE-Fighter pilots who subject her to the Dark Side until..." she said before the medics sedated her.



Fan dresses up in costume. "Bleah bleah, I am spooky!" the fan said when approached. "Bleah bleah, I have a skull face! Fear my fanny-pack of death!" He was later shot.

Trouble waiting to happen. "Could you grab that quarter for me—the one in my ear?" Sharon "Smasher" McGuinness inquired of helpless sap before leveling him with the atomic clothesline.

THY KINGDOM COME?

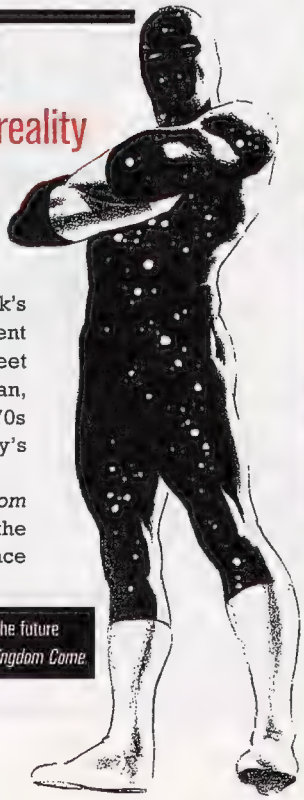
'Starman' #50 to tie into 'Kingdom Come' reality

Kingdom Come is an imaginary 'Elseworlds' story, right? Maybe not, as November's *Starman* #50 pushes the violent future of the popular 1996 mini-series closer to becoming comic book reality.

James Robinson, writer of ***Starman***, has confirmed that the book's direction looks to be *Kingdom Come*-bound. In *Starman* #50, current Starman Jack Knight will get sucked into the 30th century and meet up with Legion of Super-Heroes member Star Boy. There, Starman, Star Boy, Umbra (another Legion member) and Mikaal (the 1970s Starman) will enter a black void threatening to destroy Star Boy's home planet.

"The first scenes that Starboy will one day grow into the *Kingdom Come* Starman will be seen in issue #50," Robinson said. "And the resolution of this will come later on during Starman's run into space around issue #60. I don't want to give any more away than that."

Starman #50 will also introduce former *Books of Magic* artist **Peter Snejbjerg** as the new penciler. ■ **MATTHEW SENREICH**



THE NEW GUY Meet the future Starman, first seen in *Kingdom Come*.

PHOTOS: MITCHELL HAUSAD

CANCELED 'X-FACTOR' TO BE REPLACED WITH SPINOFF TITLE

X-Factor's **Havok** is losing his team to get his own solo adventure.

Marvel Comics has announced it will cancel ***X-Factor*** with issue #149 and replace it with a spin-off title, ***Mutant X*** in August. *X-Factor* writer Howard Mackie will write the new series with Tom Raney (*StormWatch*) penciling.

"The change is part of the X-Men's 35th anniversary," Marvel Editor-in-Chief Bob Harras said. "We wanted to make the X-books a little more diverse and this is our first step in mutating the X-franchise."

Mutant X will launch directly out of an event occurring in *X-Factor* #149 that will throw Alex Summers, Havok, into an all-new parallel Marvel Universe. Once Havok realizes he's lost in another dimension, he'll have two choices—figure out how to get home, or come to terms that he's trapped and figure out a way to live the rest of his life there.

"What's great about this new world is that you get to meet people we all know and love, but they'll be different," Harras said. "Havok'll be married to Madelyne Pryor, Storm will be called Blood Storm because in this world she never recovered from Dracula's bite [*Uncanny X-Men* #159 and *Annual* #6], Beast will look different and be called the Brute and so on."

"I know people are thinking, 'Oh God, not another parallel world,'" Harras said. "But similar to 'Age of Apocalypse,' it's a jumping-on point and opens up a whole new avenue for X-characters and new takes on characters that already exist."

Meanwhile, the other X-Factor characters will not make the jump into this alternate reality. They will simply fade into the background for a while. ■ **MATTHEW SENREICH**

COOL CAT Meet the Iceman from a parallel universe.

THE BUZZBIN

THE INSIDE SCOOP ON THE COMIC INDUSTRY

MARVEL UNIVERSE SHATTERED: Earth-shattering events spinning out of the X-Men may have the entire Marvel Universe in panic this winter. Details are sparse, but if this story comes to fruition, the entire Marvel Universe would tilt in a new direction, compliments of Magneto.

X-MEN TEAM-UP! Marvel has *not* approved it yet, but superstar pencilers Adam Kubert (who's doing *X-Men* #81-#84) and Chris Bachalo (the ongoing *Uncanny* guy) would like to team up on art duties for a couple "jam" issues of *X-Men* and *Uncanny X-Men*.

WITCHBLADE VS. DC! Looks like DC and Top Cow are *this* close to signing the dotted line for the much-rumored Batman/Darkness crossover book...and one more. Rumor has it a JLA/Witchblade project may soon follow.

A NEW BAT-GUY! As reported last month, 1999 will see massive changes in the "Batman" books as new and different creators jump on the Bat-bandwagon. The only name we've dug up so far? Former *Wolverine* writer Larry Hama is on one of the books.

MACK LEADS THE BLIND! Looks like screenwriter Kevin Smith will hand the *Daredevil* Billy club off to *Kabuki* creator David Mack. After Smith writes #1-#6, it's looking like Mack will write #7-#12. After that? Let's just say rumors are swirling that Smith has a *second* DD tale he'd like to tell.

THE GANG'S ALL HERE! Our courier-company spies tell us that master group-shot artist George Pérez has handed off the cover to DC's *Crisis on Infinite Earths* collection to Alex Ross for painting. The total character count: 562! Ross better buy some more brushes!

LARSEN GOES NOVA! Two months ago, he had one book–*Savage Dragon*. Now, Erik Larsen has picked up *Aquaman*, *Wolverine* and just sent a proposal in to Marvel for a new Nova ongoing series. It looks like Larsen wants to join the book-of-the-week club.

BUSIEK TO TELL ONE LAST 'UNTOLD TALE'

Before Spider-Man gets revamped in October, **Kurt Busiek** will tell one last untold Spidey tale.

Marvel Comics will revive the canceled ***Untold Tales of Spider-Man*** and publish a 48-page one-shot special in August, written by Kurt Busiek and penciled by Neil Vokes (*Adventures of the Mask*). The one-shot will not interfere with John Byrne's upcoming ***Twice Told Tales*** which retells and updates the Spider-Man origin.

"If John doesn't think my story fits into continuity, he'll just write his story and not make reference to mine," Busiek said. "But I'm writing it with the intention that it fits in with what Stan Lee and Steve Ditko did, and hopefully, it'll stay there."

The *Untold Tales* special will feature the first meeting between Spider-Man and Dr. Strange. "The first time in current Marvel history that we see Spidey and Dr. Strange talk [in *Amazing Spider-Man Annual* #2], Spider-Man's first words are, 'I hear ya talkin' Doc, it's starting to seem like old times,'" Busiek said. "I wanted to look into that." ■ **MATTHEW SENREICH**

we looked it up

WHO? WHERE? WHY?

QUE•SA•DA (kay SA da), José Luis (Joe) proper noun. 1962-present; 1. co-founder of Event Comics and penciler known for his dynamic cover images 2. Kevin Smith's collaborator on the revamped *Daredevil* under September's "Marvel Knights" launch 3. item soon to be available in bean, cheese and sizzlin' steak varieties as part of Taco Bell's rotating menu

QUESADA PHOTO: PAUL SCHIRALDI

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF **NAKED GUN** AND STARRING THE CREATORS OF **SOUTH PARK**

UNIVERSAL PICTURES PRESENTS A DAVID ZUCKER GAME "BASEKETBALL" TREY PARKER MATT STONE YASMINE BLEETH JENNY McCARTHY ROBERT VAUGHN WITH ERNEST BORGNINE AND DIAN BACHAR MUSIC BY IRA NEWBORN

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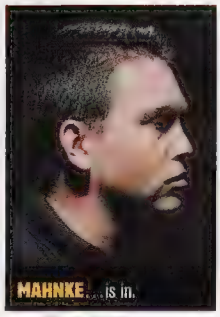
GET READY FOR A SUPER-SHAKEUP

Simonson/Bogdanove depart 'Man of Steel'; Schultz and Mahnke step in

The **Man of Steel** is getting a new look. A new creative look that is.

After over 80 issues, the founding creative team of **Louise Simonson** and Jon Bogdanove will depart *Superman: The Man of Steel* following the #1,000,000 issue this fall, making way for the new creative team of Mark Schultz (*Xenozoic Tales*) and **Doug Mahnke** (*Major Bummer*) beginning with issue #87. Additionally, Steve Epting (*X-Factor*) will take over the pencils on *Superman* with issue #143.



MAHNKE...is in.

BOGDANOVE...is out.

For Schultz, who wrote the *Man of Tomorrow* and *Action Comics* #1,000,000 issues, writing Superman will be the realization of a dream. "As a kid, I really took to Superman, and really have a great love for the [former DC editor] Mort Weisinger, '60s-era Superman," Schultz said. "There was a whole lot of fun ideas in that material that would be fun to reintroduce in carefully controlled doses. That's the approach I want to take on Superman—a return to the high adventure that marked those Weisinger stories where you had absolutely no idea what was waiting for Superman on the next page."

Superman Group Editor Joey Cavaleri was quick to point out that while Simonson and Bogdanove may be leaving *MoS*, escaping from the Super-offices isn't as easy. "[Simonson] is writing the *Superman: Save the Planet* special for us, and Bog [Bogdanove] will be doing some prestige projects for us in the near future," Cavaleri said. "He really wowed us with his art of *Man of Steel* #80-#81, the '30s-era issues, so we may have him work in that vein again."

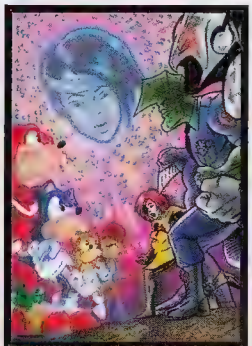
Cavaleri also admitted that the new guys will have their work cut out for them right out of the starting gate. "The new guys will be coming on the books just as the next big storyline really gets moving early next year," he said. "It will lead up to a major, global event that will come to a head next June, and like always, it'll have everyone talking." ■ **MATTHEW BRADY**

ANIMATED SPAWN, DRAGON TO APPEAR IN 'SONIC SPECIAL'

Image co-founder **Jim Valentino** has attempted to make acclaimed independent books such as *Jinx* and *Age of Heroes* more accessible to a wider audience.

Next on his agenda: **Sonic the Hedgehog**?

Well, sort of.



HIGH ON THE HOG Spawn and other heroes meet their video game master. He's a hedgehog.

Archie Comics' *Sonic Super Special* #7, penciled by Valentino and written and inked by *Sonic the Hedgehog* regular Ken Penders, features animated-style versions of **Spawn**, the **Savage Dragon**, **The Maxx**, **Shadowhawk** and other Image characters in co-starring roles with the video game mega-star Sonic—all via an interdimensional portal, of course.

Sonic's core series debuted from Archie in late '92, and has since branched out to the *Super Special* quarterly. "These are very good adventure comics and it seems to me that they're bringing in a lot of younger readers," Valentino said, who himself was drawn to the smart-mouthed Sega speedster's serials by his son. "That can only help the industry as a whole."

Sonic Super Special #7 is scheduled for a September 25 release. ■ **DEAN SIMAKIS**

McFARLANE BUYS INTO NHL FRANCHISE

Todd McFarlane has just pulled off his greatest power play.

The National Hockey League gave final approval on May 4 to a "group of local investors" to buy the **Edmonton Oilers**. Part of that group? Spawn creator and lifelong hockey fan McFarlane, who was born three hours from Edmonton. So what's McFarlane's involvement?

OWNERSHIP STAKE:

McFarlane said, "I'd rather not say. Let's just say I'm in, and I own a lot closer to 1 percent than 100 percent."

CREATIVE STAKE:

"Designing new logos and jerseys is not why I got into this. I got in because I didn't want to see another Canadian team move out of Canada. But work like that is what I do. It's in the back of my head."

ICE MAN McFarlane is now part owner of the Edmonton Oilers hockey franchise.

SPAWN'S INVOLVEMENT:

"Since I don't have a big stake, I've got to ease my way in. After a while, I think I can give the other partners a song-and-dance and do some cross-merchandising things with Spawn. I think I can add some signs and stuff to the arena soon. And I've got a Spawn Zamboni that the [minor league] Plymouth Whalers use. I'll have to see if we can use that."

DO YA WANNA GET WAYNE GRETZKY BACK?

"I don't think it will happen. But someday, they're going to retire his #99 jersey and I'll be there." ■ **JIM McLAUCHLIN**

PHOTOS: ALBERT ORTEGA

SPIDER-GIRL SPINS INTO NEW MARVEL BRANCH

New Avengers, Juggernaut Jr. in MC2

Spider-Girl. The New **Avengers**. **Juggernaut Jr**. Welcome to the new wave of Marvel comics.

Former *Amazing Spider-Man* writer Tom DeFalco heads up a new branch of Marvel Comics titled **MC2** and based on a "Spider-Girl" story he wrote in *What If?* #105. In this story and in the new line, DeFalco said, "Everything worked out okay. It led to a future that's brighter and filled with new heroes." These new heroes star in three ongoing monthly series marking the launch of MC2 in August:

• ***Spider-Girl*** (written by DeFalco, art by Pat Olliffe and Al Williamson): Here, Peter and Mary Jane Watson-Parker's daughter May grows up to follow in her Spider-dad's footsteps.

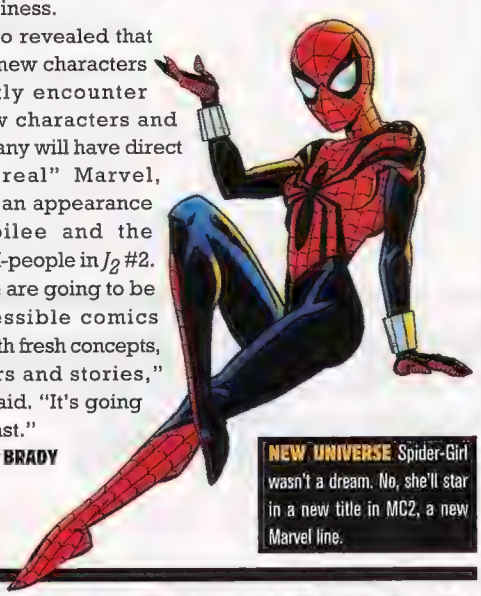
• ***A-Next*** (written by DeFalco, art by Ron Frenz and Brett Breeding): This book tells the tale of the new Avengers.

• ***J2*** (written by DeFalco, art by Ron Lim and Al Milgrom): Cain Marko Jr. follows his father—the Juggernaut—into the family business.

DeFalco revealed that while the new characters will mostly encounter other new characters and threats, many will have direct ties to "real" Marvel, including an appearance from Jubilee and the Uncanny X-people in *J2* #2.

"These are going to be fun, accessible comics packed with fresh concepts, characters and stories," DeFalco said. "It's going to be a blast."

■ **MATTHEW BRADY**



NEW UNIVERSE Spider-Girl wasn't a dream. No, she'll star in a new title in MC2, a new Marvel line.

GETTING TO KNOW THE REAL MARTIAN MANHUNTER

Longtime JLA member J'onn J'onzz—a.k.a. the **Martian Manhunter**—is finally getting an ongoing series all his own. *Martian Manhunter* #0 hits stands in August, followed by the marketing bonuses of a "One Million" issue in September (part of the all-DC Universe crossover), and a #1 in October.

The former *Spectre* team of writer **John Ostrander** and penciler **Tom Mandrake** promises to explore one of the modern DCU's oldest and most misunderstood characters. "It's been established that J'onn has different identities in different part of the world," Ostrander said. "And he's more familiar to people in the Southern Hemisphere. We'll see his other identities and more of his activities in the South. Along with that, as Earth's resident Martian, he'll also be the liaison to new aliens on Earth—the guy who shows up to see if their intentions are good or evil."

According to Ostrander, *Martian Manhunter* is long overdue. "It's time to find out who he really is." ■ **MATTHEW BRADY**

Enter The
BASEketball
Sweepstakes!

Hey, Sports Fans Wanna Play?

2 "Denslow Cup" Prizes:
A trip for 2 to the 1999 sports event of your choice! A $1,300 value!
(Continental US event only. Sports event tickets subject to availability with maximum total value of $300.)

5 "Psych-Out" Prizes:
$100 shopping sprees at both Frederick's of Hollywood and Spencer Gifts. A $200 value!

5 "Third Base" Prizes:
'You Don't Know Jack: Movies' and 'You Don't Know Jack: Sports' CD-ROM set from Berkeley Systems

5 "Second Base" Prizes:
5 BASEketball games and 5 BASEketball caps

5 "First Base" Prizes:
5 soundtracks from MOJO Records and 5 inflatable BASEketballs

Just pick up an entry form at any participating Spencer Gifts or Frederick's of Hollywood

Or enter online at www.baseketball.net

BASEketball
In Theatres July 31

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ABACULUS
Forget "South Park" and take a look at the story of four 8-year-old foul-mouthed kids in *Love Bomb* #1, hitting stores in August.

ABSTRACT STUDIOS
August's *Strangers in Paradise* #17 sees the story return to the present where Francine and Katchoo try to pick up the pieces and move on with their lives.

ANTARCTIC PRESS
In July, Antarctic releases *Stargods* #1 with a story by Dean Zachary of *Hawk & Dove* and pencils by *Alpha Flight*'s Scott Clark.

BONGO COMICS
Monty Burns spikes the donuts at the Springfield nuclear power plant in *The Simpsons* #38 in August.

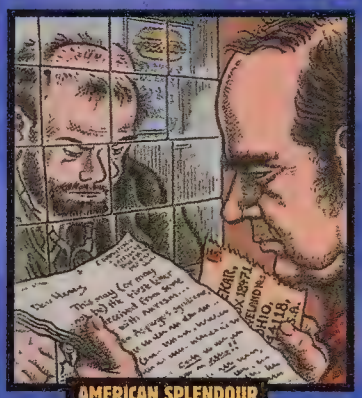
CHAOS! COMICS
August's *Evil Ernie* #3 features a battle with the vampire Purgatori and a visit to the Manson family slaying site.

EVIL ERNIE

CRUCIAL COMICS
Rat Bastard #5 features Roscoe J. Rodent celebrating everyone's favorite holiday–Vengeance Day! It's 32 pages of full-color mayhem for only $1.95 in August.

DARK HORSE COMICS
Harvey Pekar teams with autistic artist Colin Warnerford in late July for *American Splendour: Transatlantic Comics* to retell both creators' biographies. The first Star Wars movie gets the manga treatment with July's *Star Wars: A New Hope–Manga* #1. Debuting in August, *Hellboy: The Chained Coffin and Others* reprints a mess of Mike Mignola's Hellboy stories in one whopping, 176-page graphic novel.

cont'd →


AMERICAN SPLENDOUR

REMIXING THE CLASSICS

'Marvel Remix' provides new twists, new insights on classic comic moments

You loved 'em once. Marvel Comics is betting you'll love 'em again. ***Marvel Remix*** is taking a look back at classic Marvel moments in a new ongoing monthly that editor Ruben Diaz said is "not so much '*What If?*,' but 'What Else?' We take one to four issues to zoom in on a classic Marvel story to get a close-up, or maybe pull the camera way back to explain circumstances around it."

Marvel Remix #1 is slated for a November release, and will give us a new take on the first meeting of the **Fantastic Four** and the Inhumans (from *FF* #44-#47). Diaz said writer Gerard Jones and an artist to be determined "do a 'Romeo and Juliet' spin on the story. Johnny Storm and Crystal of the Inhumans are young lovers who come from rival families. In this case, we zoom in on their relationship."

After that, writer Joseph Harris (*Slingers*) and artist Michael Lopez (*Voodoo*) take a closer look at the **Punisher**'s first appearance from *Amazing Spider-Man* #129 in a single-issue story. That's followed by **Scott Lobdell** (*X-Men*) and Larry Stroman (*X-Factor*) on a four-issue "Korvac Saga" take from *Avengers* #167-#177. Then the ball *really* gets rolling.

Diaz is lining up classic *Uncanny X-Men* scribe **Chris Claremont** to remix his **"Dark Phoenix Saga."** Chuck Dixon (*Batman*) would love to write a Thor tale, according to Diaz. Artists such as **Mike Wieringo** (*Sensational Spider-Man*) and '70s Marvel fanatic **Carlos Pacheco** (*X-Men*) have also expressed interest in drawing stories, Diaz added. "I also want to remix creators," he said. "Take some guys who have never worked together before and toss them together. I think the possibilities are massive." ■ **JIM McLAUCHLIN**

'WILDC.A.T.s/ALIENS' HITS WILDSTORM

'StormWatch' destroyed, title canceled

StormWatch's **Warren Ellis** plans to make WildStorm's upcoming ***WildC.A.T.s/Aliens*** one-shot stand out: "We're doing a crossover book that actually has some kind of impact."

The story, which features art by Chris Sprouse and Kevin Nowlan, is appropriately titled "Final Orbit." When an escape module from StormWatch's orbital platform lands in downtown New York, it leads to a nasty discovery: The station has succumbed to a biological infestation (read: Aliens) and an impenetrable force field has trapped some 500 people aboard.

Despite the WildC.A.T.s' intervention, Ellis has issued a warning: "Not everyone is going to make it out alive." And that's the point for Ellis, who admitted he's grown bored with the StormWatch crew. "I couldn't stand the sight of them anymore and I wanted to kill them," he said.

Needless to say, *StormWatch* is coming to a close. Issue #11 will be the series' swan song and will hit stands two weeks after *WildC.A.T.s/Aliens*, a late August release. StormWatch fans shouldn't lose all hope just yet, however. Ellis said some of the team—most likely members of StormWatch Black, who will not be trapped on the station—have a good shot at surviving.

"The rumor is that Bryan Hitch, *StormWatch*'s artist, and I will be doing a new series that may or not have something to do with StormWatch," Ellis said. He confirmed that the new series, which is tentatively titled *The Authority* and may be out before the end of the year, will tie-in with *WildC.A.T.s/Aliens*. ■ **SCOTT A. AUBREY**

WITCHBLADE FINDS UNLIKELY PARTNER IN WEASEL GUY

Just call them the odd couple.

Hyperwerks' new self-centered superhero Weasel Guy has a new partner in this July's one-shot. And it's...**Witchblade**?

It's not as funky as it sounds. "[*Weasel Guy* writer/penciler] Steve Buccellato came to me with this idea that he had," Hyperwerks rep Matt Hawkins said. "It reminded me of *Batman Adventures*. He's got connections at Top Cow. We felt it would really help launch his book."

That connection was *Witchblade* co-creator David Wohl, who appears in the book as himself.

"In the world of Weasel Guy, there is no Witchblade," Buccellato said. "She appears only in the comics. Weasel Guy is jaded, and moving to Hollywood to give up being a superhero. Dave Wohl is pitching *Witchblade* [the movie], but having trouble selling. The villain of the tale brings Witchblade to life to fight Weasel Guy."

The end result? "Wackiness ensues," Buccellato said. Doesn't it always? The *Witchblade/Weasel Guy* one-shot goes on sale in July. ■ **JAKE ROSSEN**

HAND OUT Witchblade meets up with Weasel Guy in "wacky" one-shot.

contest winners

LUCKY STIFFS

Chris Uhrin of Burlington, Ontario, Canada assembled some mighty prizes including George Pérez original art (!) in *Wizard* #80's "Avengers Assemble" contest!

Andrew Llamas of Oakland, Calif., took home the *Tomb Raider II* video game, a PlayStation of his very own to play it on and the *Tomb Raider/Witchblade* comic signed by suave and sophisticated writer/artist Michael Turner in the "Tomb Raider II Mania" contest from *Wizard* #80!

HELLCOP™
ISSUE ONE

"China Town meets Dante's Inferno."

Joe Casey
(Cable, Incredible Hulk)

Gilbert Monsanto
(Tales of Darkness)

Brian Haberlin
(Witchblade, Spawn)

Coming in October
from

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DC COMICS

Batman appears in July's *Chase* #8. Also in July, *Legends of the DC Universe 80-Page Giant* features the talents of Joe Kubert, Peter David, James Robinson and Dave Gibbons. Ron Marz will write a four-issue story arc of Superman in August (*Action Comics* #749, *Man of Steel* #84, *Superman* #140 and *Adventures of Superman* #563).

EVENT COMICS

Brian Augustyn and Randy Queen co-write a *Painkiller Jane/Darkchylde* crossover one-shot in August.

PAINKILLER JANE/DARKCHYLDE

FANTAGRAPHICS

In July, Fantagraphics published the trade paperback of *White Like She*, which is early work by *Minimum Wage's* artist/writer Bob Fingerman. The issues were originally published by Dark Horse, but will be collected by Fantagraphics in a 104-page trade.

EXHIBIT A PRESS

August's all-ages geared *Wolff & Byrd's Secretary, Mavis* #1 will contain pin-up art by Terry Moore (*Strangers in Paradise*).

HARRIS COMICS

Grant Morrison and Mark Millar wrap up the Vampirella/Shi three-part crossover with August's *Vampirella/Shi: Queen's Gambit* #3.

HEAD PRESS PUBLISHING

The anthology comic book *Romantic Tales* will debut in August and feature the works of Jeff Mariotte, Shon Bury, Mike Leonard and more.

IMAGE COMICS

Ascension co-creator and former *The Darkness* inker Batt jumps to ink *The Tenth* beginning with issue #10.

• HIGHBROW

Who's a descendant of the gods? Who isn't? Find out as Erik Larsen sends Hercules to Earth to bring the gods' kids back to Godworld in August's *Savage Dragon* #52.

• TOP COW COMICS

Dave Finch (*Ascension*) and Randy Green hammer out August's *Tales of the Witchblade* #6, featuring an ancient Celtic Witchblade-bearer. *Fathom* #1's three alternate versions

cont'd →

CRUSADE BATTLES WITH MARVEL

New 'BattleBooks' project merges comics, games

The line between gaming and comics blurs with a new project planned by **Crusade Entertainment**, publisher of *Shi*. ***BattleBooks*** will allow gamers to pit their favorite Crusade—and **Marvel Comics**—characters against one another this summer.

Here's how it works: Each *BattleBooks* will contain 22 comic-sized splash pages of Crusade or Marvel characters in battle poses. Players select moves they want to throw at their adversary, and consult a grid that leads them to their adversary's attack. Points are subtracted when damage is done, and the game continues until one character loses all his points.

Crusade President **Billy Tucci** came up with the idea for the game when he observed kids playing a collectible card game called *Lost Worlds*—and having a blast in the process. Crusade then licensed the game system for *BattleBooks*.

While only Marvel is on board today, Crusade hopes the project will blossom further. "I want to unite all the universes," Tucci said, noting that invitations have been extended to all major publishers in the field.

Crusade plans to debut the game/comics at this summer's conventions. The books will be sold individually, tentatively priced at $3.95, or in two-packs for $6.95. Initial releases are expected to focus on Marvel's heavy hitters **Spider-Man** and **Wolverine**—and Crusade's Shi. ■ **SCOTT A. AUBREY**

THUMBING OFF

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

THUMBS UP

JOHN ROMITA JR.: JR Jr. proves to young pencilers that they can put out two high-quality books each and every month. Romita consistently turns in stellar work on *Thor* and *Peter Parker: Spider-Man* at a time when some pencilers struggle to handle one book a month.

DC COMICS AND THE CARTOON NETWORK: DC Comics and the Cartoon Network teamed up to give away one million comics. For *free*. And the Cartoon Network hyped the event with on-air commercials. While the comics may have been based on the Cartoon Network's non-superhero cartoon "Cow and Chicken," anything that can hook new comic book readers is a great idea.

GREEN LANTERN CONTROVERSY: The resurfacing of Hal Jordan in *Green Lantern* #99 has fans going loopy and only serves to escalate the Hal vs. Kyle Rayner debate. Controversy fuels emotion and emotion creates interest...and *Green Lantern* sales reflect that with an 85 percent increase in two months!

THUMBS DOWN

'WOLVERINE' #125: The announcement that longtime X-Men creator Chris Claremont was returning to *Wolverine* got fans excited. But the issue was a big letdown. Too many characters muddied the plot and the twists came out of left field. Wolverine's married to Viper? Where did *that* come from?

SUPERMAN MOVIE DELAYED: Will Superman ever fly to the big screen? For now, it looks like the project may be grounded with the announcement Warner Bros. has indefinitely pushed back the shoot date for the planned Tim Burton film. Listen up Hollywood, don't get our hopes up only to let them down.

'MAJOR BUMMER' CANCELED: Why? Unfortunately we know why. Sales didn't pick up on this sleeper title about a slacker kid who accidentally gained incredible superpowers. We understand DC had to do it, but it's sad to see a good read and a fun book go, especially when books like *Fourth World* and *Lobo* get longer life spans. *Major Bummer*, we'll miss you.

HALLOWEEN COSTUME CRAZINESS!

Okay, so maybe pumpkin season is still months off. But the seventh annual *Wizard* Halloween Costume Contest is in high gear and we need *you* to enter!

Where else can you dress up like your favorite character and show the comic world what a nutcase you are? And, if we pick you as our Grand Prize Winner, you'll take home a prize package so freakin' spooky, we can't even tell ya what it is yet! But trust us, it'll be cooler than frozen alligators on a stick! And yeah, there'll be a buncha Runner-Up prizes too, just in case you get beat out for the *numero uno* spot.

Anyway, here's what you gotta do:

1) **Dress up** like anyone (or anything) you want—a comic book character, video game character, something out of a book or movie, whatever (the more original your getup, the better your chances of winning).

2) **The actual costume** itself must be HOMEMADE, but you can add store-bought items to accent your outfit. For example, you can't go out and just buy a Spider-Man suit, but you can use a store-bought whip for your Catwoman costume. Get it?

3) **Have someone photograph** you in your costume (Polaroids will NOT be accepted!), then write your name, age, full address, phone number and name of the character you're dressed as on a small piece of paper, attach it to the back of the photo (Don't write on the photo!) and send it to the address below. All photos must be color prints, and we suggest taking multiple shots with multiple poses in case some pictures suck. And remember that magic five-letter word: "focus."

4) **Write down how** you made your costume. Tell us the process in which you created it, what materials you used, etc. This way, if you win, we can use this info to tell the world how much of a genius you are.

5) To be eligible to win, **we must receive your photo by August 3, 1998**, so get sewin'!

Send your entry to:
Costume Contest 7
c/o Wizard Entertainment
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920-0118
Do it today! You'll be glad you did!
More details next issue!

ship in equal quantities in July, not a 2:1:1 ratio as originally planned.

WILDSTORM PRODUCTIONS
August's *Danger Girl: The Dangerous Collection* ($5.95) includes *Danger Girl* #1, the New Horizons preview edition, all the variant covers, behind-the-scenes sketches and lots o' surprises!

MARVEL COMICS
July's *Rampaging Hulk* is available with covers from Rick Leonardi and Dan Green or Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti. Meanwhile, *Marvel Universe* #4 sports a jam cover by eight artists, including Michael Golden and Bruce Timm.

KITCHEN SINK PRESS
Comic legends John Byrne, Frank Miller, Chris Claremont, Brian Bolland, Will Eisner and 45 others pool their talents for a super-neat "The Spirit" tale for August's *The Spirit Jam Softcover*. This 48-page book will also contain a bonus story where The Spirit meets Aardvark-Vanaheim's Cerebus.

RADIO COMIX
Being deemed as "South Park" meets *Johnny the Homicidal Maniac*, August's *Lortnoc* #1 examines the angst-ridden Vid Vad and his first day of school.

SIRIUS ENTERTAINMENT
August's *Akiko* #27 has Akiko and friends split up to save the life of Professor Lunderdorf.

SLAVE LABOR GRAPHICS
August sees the *Squee! Trade Paperback*, collecting all four issues of Jhonen Vasquez' critically acclaimed sadistic series.

THORNBY COMICS
The bi-monthly *SpaceGal*, a space odyssey starring a knock 'em dead, wise-ass hit woman, debuts in July.

TOPPS COMICS
Xena, Warrior Princess: The Original Olympics #3 ships in August with a variant photo cover featuring actress Lucy Lawless.

VANGUARD PRODUCTIONS
August's 68-page, $4.95 volume, *Tales From the Edge: Boyette Special* focuses on the macabre work of famed horror artist Pat Boyette, whose work has graced the pages of *Creepy*, *Eerie* and *Vampirella*.

VIZ COMICS
July's *Dragonball Z* #5 features a battle to the death! It's Goku and Piccolo vs. Raditz, and someone bites the black bag.

DRAGONBALL Z

WAID AND PEYER TAKE ON 'BARRY AND HAL'

'JLA: Year One' heroes star in mini-series

Sometimes it's just too much fun to quit.

At least that's the case with **Mark Waid**, who found that writing *JLA: Year One* (with co-writer Brian Augustyn) has been some of the most fun he's had in comics in years. So if it's been such a blast, why stop?

Taking a cue from a suggestion by Tom Peyer, Waid and Peyer will co-write a six-issue mini-series tentatively titled *Barry & Hal*, starring the Silver Age **Flash** (Barry Allen) and **Green Lantern** (Hal Jordan). Similar in tone to *JLA: Year One*, the series will feature the adventures of the two heroes in the early days of their careers, allowing readers to see turning points in their lives as well as the development of their friendship over the years.

"Unlike *JLA: Year One*, which was one long story, we'll be doing six stand-alone issues, beginning with Flash and Green Lantern's first case together, with subsequent issues taking place about a year later," Waid explained. "We'll be seeing all the characters readers love—Kid Flash, the Green Lantern Corps, Iris West, Carol Ferris, Pie Kalmaku and more. We're still shaping the stories, but count on one of the earlier ones being a Barry-Jay Garrick-Wally West-Hal-Alan Scott team-up against the Golden Age Star Sapphire, who was a Flash villain, and her Silver Age counterpart, who was a Green Lantern villain."

Along with featuring guest-stars, look for the mini-series to answer some nagging questions as well. "Other issues will deal with such things as Barry's jealousy over Hal's new friendship with that rabble-rouser and hippie, **Green Arrow**," Waid said. "And we'll also answer the lingering question of why Green Lantern never had a kid sidekick."

Returning for the fun, *JLA: Year One* penciler **Barry Kitson** will be providing the art.

Still officially unscheduled, Waid said the *Barry & Hal* mini-series should launch shortly after the conclusion of *JLA: Year One* later this year.

■ **MATTHEW BRADY**

HEY! WE'RE JUST FRIENDS! *Barry & Hal* pairs Flash and Green Lantern in a sorta-sequel to *JLA: Year One*.

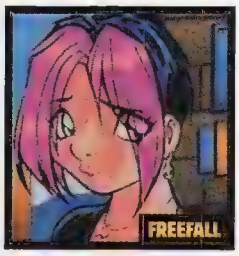
'GEN13' MANGA, PART 2

Freefall stars in manga-esque mini-series

Grunge had his shot at stardom. Now it's Freefall's turn.

In the wildly successful *Grunge: The Movie* mini-series in *Gen13 Bootleg*, poor Freefall (a.k.a. Roxy) had to share the stage with the burly title character. Not anymore. This fall's *Gen13: Magical Drama Queen Roxy* mini-series from manga-esque writer/artist **Adam Warren** puts Roxy front and center—but probably not how she imagined it.

"Roxy has a nightmare in which she's a magical heroine," explained Warren. "It's clear that she's feeling embattled, picked upon by everyone around her. The dream reflects this, as everyone she runs into in this nightmare are demented versions of people she knows." *Magical Drama Queen Roxy*, a 40-page, three-issue mini-series under the *Gen13* banner, ships late this fall. ■ **JAKE ROSSEN**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WITCHBLADE™
GUEST STARS IN
WEASEL GUY WITCHBLADE™
ONE-SHOT
TOP COW'S
FEMME FATALE
MEETS
HYPERWERKS'
SLACKER HERO!
STORY & ART
BY UNCANNY X-MEN'S
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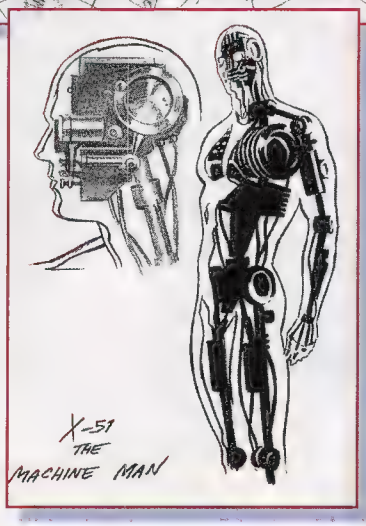
'EARTH X': UNDER CONSTRUCTION

You saw it in a 16-page preview in *Wizard #77*. You've been clamoring for it ever since. It's ***Earth X*** and creator **Alex Ross** declared, "We've got the full team ready to roll. Marvel's been very consistent that they want it. It's just that contracts are taking so damn long."

Those contracts are for Ross and Jim Krueger (*Foot Soldiers*), who co-write the project, and the former *Challengers of the Unknown* pencil-ink-color team of John Paul Leon, Bill Reinhold and Matt Hollingsworth.

Even without a contract, Ross and crew are working on *Earth X*, which deals with what happens to the Marvel Universe after "Plague X" hits, giving superpowers to everyone. "When everyone is super, is anyone a superhero?" Ross asked. "That's what we're dealing with here."

Ross is also dealing with logistics. He plans *Earth X* as a 14-issue miniseries, with a #0 hitting December 1998, issues #1-#12 coming monthly through 1999 and the big-finish #13 coming in the new millennium. Ross is also designing and refining characters as they might look when projected into the *Earth X* future. Ross will paint the covers to all 14 issues and when combined, the images will create one giant-sized poster.

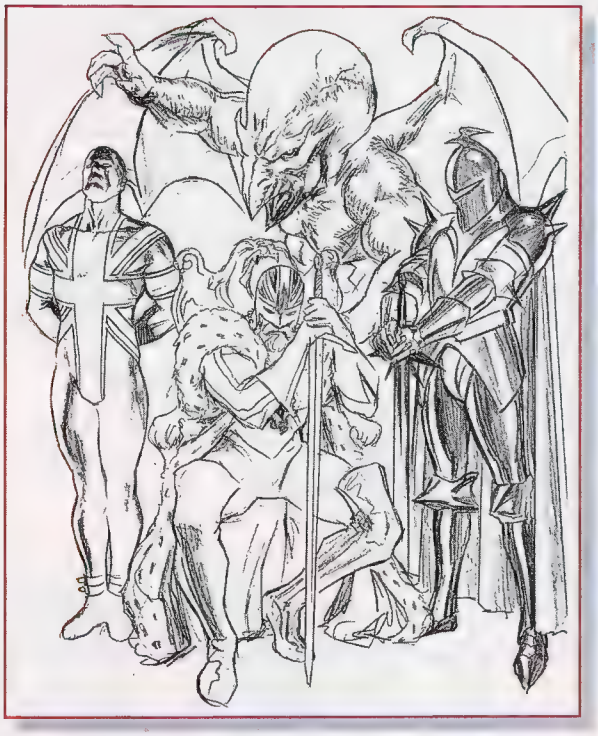


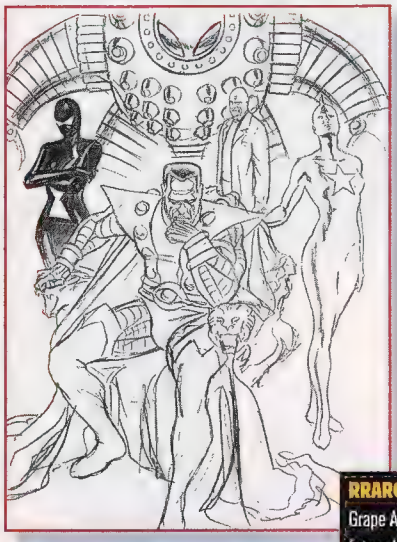
'X' MEN Leon (his Cap and Thing art shown above) would pencil *Earth X* from Ross' character designs (shown at right and opposite).

"We'll see some of the nations come together," Ross promised. "Like the Russian contingent here." The Russian contingent consists of (shown below center, clockwise, from left) Ross' versions of the Black Widow, Crimson Dynamo, Red Guardian and Colossus. "But Colossus has kind of been promoted," Ross said. "He's now Czar Pitor."

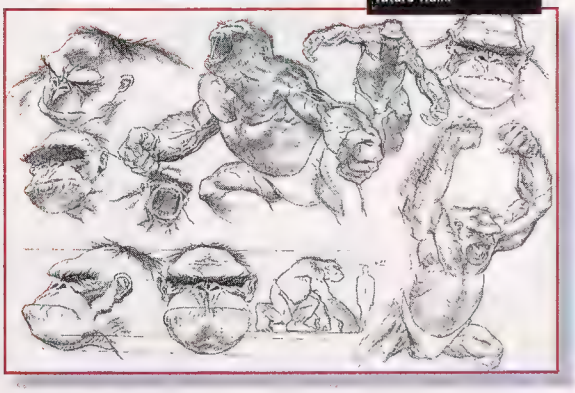
Ross' British group shot consists of (top; clockwise, from left) Union Jack, Dragon Man, the Black Knight, and Captain Britain, who's now King Britain. Ross also promises an African alliance that will include King Panther (formerly the Black Panther) and Queen Ororo (the X-Men's Storm).

And what of X-51, the Machine Man? Is he the same Machine Man we know? Or a new construct? "I've already done the preview book and said too much already," Ross said. "You'll just have to wait and see." ■ JIM McLAUCHLIN





RRARGH! Nah, it ain't Grape Ape below–it's the future Hulk.



JIM BRENT

LAST MAN STANDING

comic battles you never thought you'd see

WONDER WOMAN VS. ROGUE

THE COMBATANTS

TALE OF THE TAPE

5'11"	HEIGHT	5'8"
135 lbs	WEIGHT	120 lbs
71"	REACH	68"
Paradise Island	HOMETOWN	Caldecott County, Miss.
Clay	DNA	Mutated
Lasso	PARAPHERNALIA	Peroxide

Born with the mutant ability to absorb the powers and memories of anyone she makes direct contact with, the southern woman known only as Rogue has permanently stolen the powers of the heroine Ms. Marvel, granting her superhuman strength, invulnerability and the power of flight. She has since reformed and joined the X-Men where she now uses her powers to protect mankind.

Created by the gods as a gift to the Amazonian Queen Hippolyta, Princess Diana possesses inhuman strength, speed and endurance, near-invulnerability, flight and extensive warrior training. Having left her island home behind, Diana now fights for the forces of good alongside the Justice League of America. (And yes, we're talkin' pre-godlike Wonder Woman).

So when two of comicdom's most powerful women collide, who's left standing?

tha winnah... Letting Rogue gain the early advantage to better determine her foe's abilities, Wonder Woman will absorb some initial punishment...and then go on the offensive. As the stronger, tougher and faster Wonder Woman takes the battle airborne (an environment she, unlike Rogue, was born to), the X-Man will begin to falter. That's when the gloves come off...literally. Using her innate mutant abilities, Rogue would be able to pull off some brief skin-to-skin contact, gaining some of Wonder Woman's powers, in turn weakening the Amazon. A juiced-up Rogue would shortly—after a few more power-swiping contacts—plop her exhausted mutant keister down next to the defeated Wonder Woman.

this month's battle drawn by JIM BALENT

TEAM SPIRIT™

No way. End of discussion. Neil Gaiman just wasn't going to do it. It was 1996, and the former *Sandman* writer was chatting with Kitchen Sink Press publisher Denis Kitchen. Kitchen was trying to coax Gaiman into contributing to an ambitious KSP project—one the publisher had been trying to put together for the last 20 years—and Gaiman was recoiling, refusing, rebelling from the start. There was no way he was going to write a story featuring the detective crime-fighter The Spirit.

No way.

"Absolutely not," Gaiman says, recalling the conversation. "*The Spirit* stories are as good as they get. I can't do it better than Will did, and I won't write any new adventures."

Who's The Spirit? What new adventures? "Will" who? And why did Gaiman change his mind just months later, joining the ranks of top comic talents Kurt Busiek, Alan Moore, Dave Gibbons, Mike Allred, Paul Chadwick, John Ostrander and others to contribute to a superhero that is now almost 60 years old?

In four words, living legend Will Eisner.

"You can say that Jack Kirby was the most creative creator we've ever had in comics, but Eisner is the master of technique," *Astro City* creator Kurt Busiek says. "Kirby kind of comes off god-like because it's all just so magical. With Eisner, it's *all skill*."

Eisner skillfully crafted The Spirit—a detective who relies on guile rather than a gun (picture Batman without the gadgets)—by utilizing stylish design in his page layouts, relying on heavy black ink for mood and telling stories about the pitfalls of the common man. The eight-page *Spirit* comic strip section ran in newspapers every Sunday from 1940 to 1952. Except for one story in 1966, the occasional series of pinups or reprints, The Sprit was officially retired.

Now, after 46 years, Kitchen Sink has successfully lured Eisner and his hero back to be interpreted by today's hottest creators with *The Spirit: The New Adventures*. Kitchen Sink's bait was simple: a new audience. "That's the reason I agreed to let Kitchen Sink get these mighty young lions to do stories with The Spirit," Eisner says. "Denis' argument was, 'Well, if you're not going to do any more Spirit stories, you're going to allow a whole generation to come

Why are today's top creators flocking to 'The Spirit: The New Adventures,' starring a 58-year-old superhero you've never heard of?

By Chris Hutchins

WHO'S HE? Neil Gaiman and Kurt Busiek were scared to death to write one of these heroes. Can you guess which one?

OPENING ARTWORK BY MIKE MIGNOLO

and go that won't know anything about the character.' I said, 'If you can get some of the top talent in the field to do it, then okay.' Secretly, I never thought he'd get anyone to do it. I was wrong."

Even still, Eisner was apprehensive about the project. "The feeling is like giving your child up for adoption," he laughs. But the veritable "who's who" of creators KSP reeled in put him at ease.

That includes Moore and Gibbons—the team that brought readers the award-winning *Watchmen* mini-series—who produced the entire first issue, which was released in March.

"We really wanted to do something that directly came from Eisner's inspiration," Moore says. "We were trying to go for stories that weren't knock-offs to Eisner's stories, but extracted elements of his kind of style and pacing. We also wanted to draw from different periods of 'The Spirit'—the slightly different approaches of the story, and that feeling of a vaguely supernatural science fiction mystery."

Gaiman and Eddie Campbell (*From Hell*) tackled a tale in April's second issue and *Judge Dredd* creators John Wagner and Carlos Ezquerra spun a story in issue #3.

One of the things all these creators agreed upon was the overwhelming emotions that came with Kitchen Sink's invitation.

"The first thing I said was, 'You bet!'" Busiek, who wrote a story for June's issue #4, says. "The second thing I said was, '*Oh my god*. I've gotta write a Spirit story.'"

Busiek wasn't alone in his fears. After he took the job, *Cadillacs & Dinosaurs* creator Mark Schultz quipped, "My god, how can I possibly do this?" Gibbons agrees: "You really have to pinch yourself to make sure it's true." And Gaiman's take on sitting down to come up with a *Spirit* story?

"It was terrifying," he says. "Absolutely terrifying."

Despite creators' fears, Eisner's role in *The Spirit: The New Adventures* is an active, if low-key one. He reads all scripts and pencils an occasional cover, but has no involvement in the creative aspects of the stories. The look of the tales and the words belong to the guest creators. "I review every one of the stories, but only allow myself the right to object in the event that they mistreated the configuration of *The Spirit*," the 81-year-old Eisner says. "I didn't want, for example, The Spirit to be a dope addict, as in the case of Batman." (Eisner refers to a *Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight* tale with Batman addicted to a super-steroid.)

Does this revival inspire Eisner to do a new Spirit story? No, he's content to let others take their crack at his creation while he moves on to other playgrounds. "The wonderful thing about this medium is that it's still young and new, and there's so much to explore and so many new things to do. To stop what I'm doing and continue to do The Spirit again would be, as far as I'm concerned, a waste. The big joke with me and Denis [Kitchen] is when he asks, 'Have you thought about doing another Spirit story?' I'd say, 'Yes I have, but every time I do, I lie down until the feeling goes away.' I feel I succeeded in doing what I did, and I was very happy about it."

So what can readers expect in the upcoming issues? In June's issue #4, look for Busiek and George Freeman's piece, "The Samovar of Shooshnipoor"—a tale about Sand Saref, The Spirit's childhood-sweetheart-turned-criminal—and a quirky Allred story featuring a 10-foot-tall killer Nazi robot. *Concrete*'s Chadwick gets all of issue #5 to himself, writing and penciling an "honest-to-god mystery" that leads The Spirit and Ebony into the ghettos of Central City. Issue #6 has Ostrander and artist Tom Mandrake having some fun with a con man who's pretending to be a psychic. ("And there's going to be a big fight; a big, classic fight," the writer promises.)

Plans after that? *New Adventures* editor Catherine Garnier says Frank Miller will be doing something for the book and Alex Ross says he will definitely be painting a cover. And expect more great talent, she says.

In the end, it's the love of the

Who is The Spirit?

NAME: The Spirit, a.k.a. Denny Colt
BIRTHPLACE: Central City
FIRST APPEARANCE: "The Spirit Section," June 2, 1940
HIS DEAL: He's Batman without the gadgets. A keen detective, The Spirit wears a blue eyemask, suit, trenchcoat and fedora to fight Central City's underworld.

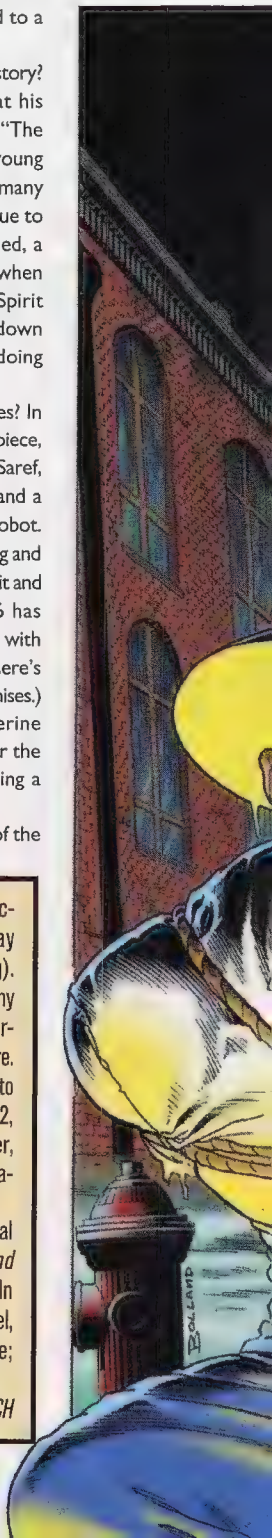
Will Who?

NAME: Will Eisner
OCCUPATION: As Eisner puts it: "A writer who writes in pictures."
BORN: March 6, 1917 in New York City
BASE OF OPERATIONS: Tamarac, Florida
CAREER HIGHLIGHTS: In the 1930s, Eisner was the one of the most creative forces in pioneering the comics field. Partnered with Jerry Iger, Eisner created the industry's first "studio," selling comics to publishers. The team employed the budding talents of Jack Kirby, Bob Kane and Lou Fine.

By 1940, Eisner had left Eisner & Iger to create the first syndicated newspaper comic book. It was here the very influential *The Spirit* section was born (each Sunday section was eight pages long). Eisner was drafted into the Army during World War II, and supervised the *The Spirit* stories there. He also convinced the Army to create educational comics for G.I. training manuals. In 1952, Eisner left "The Spirit" to pursue a career as a publisher, selling educational comics to schools and private companies until 1972.

He began a teaching career at the School For Visual Arts (1974-1993), and wrote two books, *Comics and Sequential Art* (1985) and *Graphic Storytelling* (1995). In 1978, he released what's considered the first graphic novel, *A Contract With God*. He's been writing graphic novels since; his latest graphic novel, *Family Matter*, debuts in July.

Comics' prestigious Eisner Awards are named after him. ■ *CH*



character and its creator that's bringing folks to the title, Gaiman says. That, and in the case of one particular writer who *absolutely refused* to write a Spirit story, a little encouragement from a living legend.

"Everybody gives up comics occasionally," Gaiman says. "During that period between the ages of 17 and 22 when I gave up comics, I didn't give up Eisner. I didn't give up *The Spirit*. I would still hunt down the reprints because they're just as good as comics ever get. When Denis came to me, I said no. So then Denis pulled out the big guns.

"He had Will Eisner talk to me."

Kentucky-based writer Chris Hutchins once refused to write an Emmanuel Lewis comic. And then Emmanuel Lewis talked to him.

BOUND UP Like any great detective, the Spirit is a real ladies' man.

Creators Love Eisner

In 1940, Will Eisner's crimefighter The Spirit slugged his way into Sunday newspapers, surprising readers and inspiring comic creators. Here's what some of the today's comic book creators say about Eisner's influence on their work.

TODD McFARLANE

"A lot of what enamored me with his stuff was mood, even though there was a lighthearted feel to *The Spirit*. I always loved the feeling that it was always 2 o'clock in the morning or something, and it had a sort of ambiance to it. He was also very impressive in terms of page layouts–Will proved you could incorporate design into storytelling."

JERRY ORDWAY

"What I take with me is that he was able to do complete stories that were fairly involved with not really a long page count–*The Spirit* sections really weren't that long. It makes for challenging storytelling, and that's something to aspire to."

GEORGE PÉREZ

"Will inspired me after I turned pro. I started looking at his storytelling and his rather unique page layout, where he did some very interesting use in panel progression. That, of course, always inspired me."

JEFF SMITH

"Graphically, Will is one of those people who has no fear of just smearing big blobs of black all over the page, just load up the brush and go. I love that. And his characters have clear, defined personalities–you really weren't sure how a story was going to affect a character. There were consequences there."

ADAM KUBERT

"What influences me is his acting ability–how he portrays his characters, body language, that sort of thing. I met him for the first time recently. I never do this, but I asked him for a sketch and all I had [him to sketch on] was a Moebius book that I bought. That book is now my most important book, believe me."

PETER DAVID

"In terms of reminding us that sometimes the most interesting stories are the ones that deal with simple, real people–that, to me, is his most interesting influence."

CHUCK DIXON

"Will Eisner has the ability to create tension on a printed page using just static pictures. The guy is a master at creating tension." ■ *CH*

GEORGE PÉREZ: BRIAN SMITH; ADAM KUBERT: PAUL SCHIBALDI; PETER DAVID: AL ORTEGA ALL OTHER PHOTOS © WIZARD ENTERTAINMENT

WATER

'Wizard' dives into Michael Turner's personal sketchbook as he launches his newest project, 'Fathom'

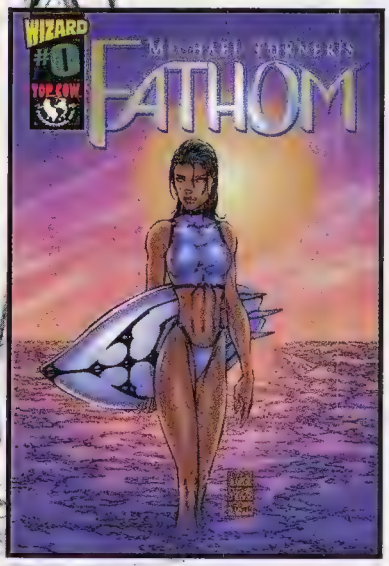
By Michael Turner

It sounds corny, but my sketchbooks are my best friends.

I take one everywhere. Conventions. Vacations. Heck, I even keep one by my bed, 'cause you never know when you're going to wake up in the middle of the night with a picture in your head that you've just *got* to draw.

I throw all my ideas—words *and* pictures—into my books. Then I build and build. Every page layout I've done for 22 issues of *Witchblade* is contained in my books. And since I try to never repeat a layout, I always refer back to my sketchbooks.

About two years ago, I tried scuba diving for the first time and was totally blown away by this incredible and mysterious underwater world. I was hooked. My sketchbooks were suddenly filled with drawings of fish, eels and coral formations. Then, while flipping through my books, I realized I'd never seen an underwater comic done the way *I'd* want one done. So I took my drawings and built *Fathom*, the story of a 25-year-old marine biologist named Aspen, who's just been invited to join Deep Marine Discovery Inc., a high-tech research facility on the ocean floor.



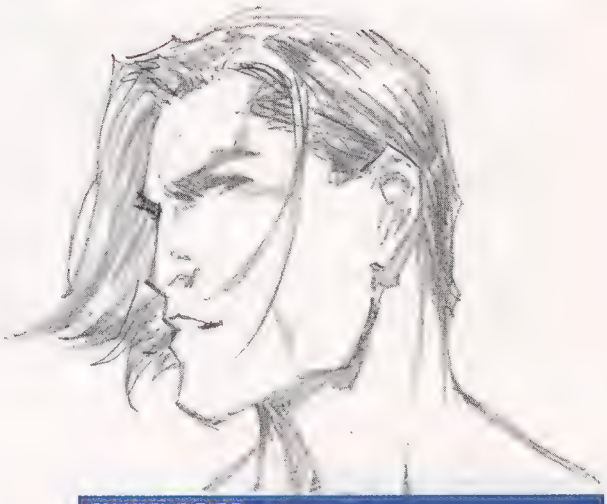
Now I'm hoping to transfer the look of this amazing undersea world in a way that looks real, but still spectacular. I guarantee there won't be anyone riding the backs of giant sea turtles or people with fins on their ears. So here's your peek inside some of my sketchbooks. Hope you enjoy the dive.

WORLD

THE CAST

TYLER

Tyler is Aspen's roommate. She's a TV reporter who's a lot different from Aspen. She's a real party animal, but can turn on the professionalism when she has must. And she can get really devious if she needs to get the scoop.



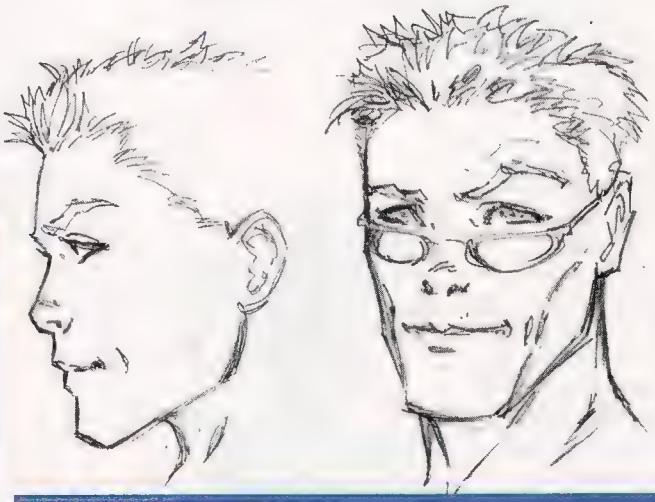
CANNON

Cannon will be a main character. He's sort of a liaison between the American and Japanese interests of DMD, but his real loyalties are questionable. And he's a bad-ass—a James Bond-like guy who's very dangerous if crossed.

◀ FATHOM #0 COVER

This here's the layout for the cover to *Fathom* #0. I wanted to keep it simple and peaceful, with Aspen returning alone from a day of surfing. The feel you get from the cover is the feel I want people to get of her. She's an introspective person, very confident, and not emotionally extreme. She's not the kind who's going to giggle her ass off or get real depressed. She's even-tempered, mellow, kind of California-cool.

The "top" Aspen is wearing is called a rash guard. It's made of a very thin, silky material that surfers wear over their chest and stomach so the wax from the surfboard doesn't irritate their skin. It's less "sexy" than a bikini top, but more practical.



CHANCE

This guy is Chance. He's a test pilot for classified military aircraft, and he'll be testing some amphibious jets that are being developed. He's very cocky and a real smart-ass, just like most real test pilots. I kind of picture him as a combination of the characters "Maverick" and "Goose" from "Top Gun." He'll be one of the good guys, and a real friend to Aspen once they're brought together.

THE VILLAIN

Here's our main villain. He comes from underwater, so I'm giving him the swimmer's body—big shoulders, strong back. He's gotta be a real big guy.

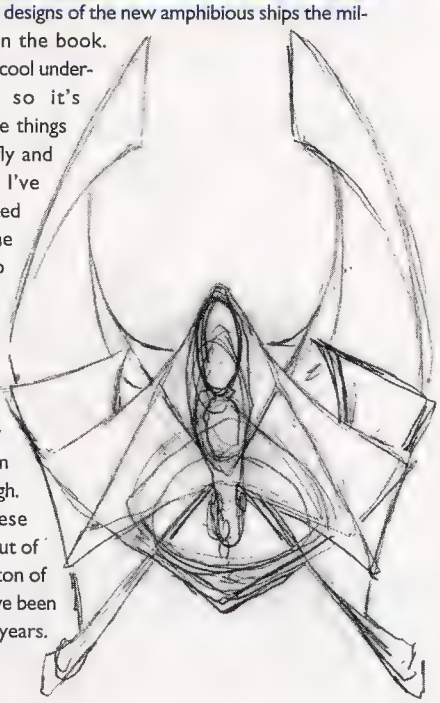
He's pretty psycho, but also very intelligent, skilled and calculating. His main purpose will remain hidden for the first three issues or so, just like his name. He won't have any sort of superhero code name. There won't be any guys named "Manta Ray" or "Sea Urchin" in the book.

His gun is something I'm working on that I want to look half organic/half tech. It looks natural, but still looks like something that could kick your ass.

THE TECH

UNDERWATER FIGHTER JETS

Here are some early designs of the new amphibious ships the military's developing in the book. We're going to have cool underwater dogfights, so it's important that these things look like they can fly and work underwater. I've always been fascinated by aircraft. I was one of those kids who spent *way* too much time in school drawing planes instead of doing my work. I have tons of aircraft books in my library at home that I'm always looking through. The designs for these just kind of sprung out of my head based on a ton of old inspiration that I've been looking through for years.



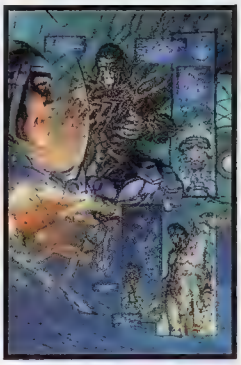
DMD DEEP WATER SUITS

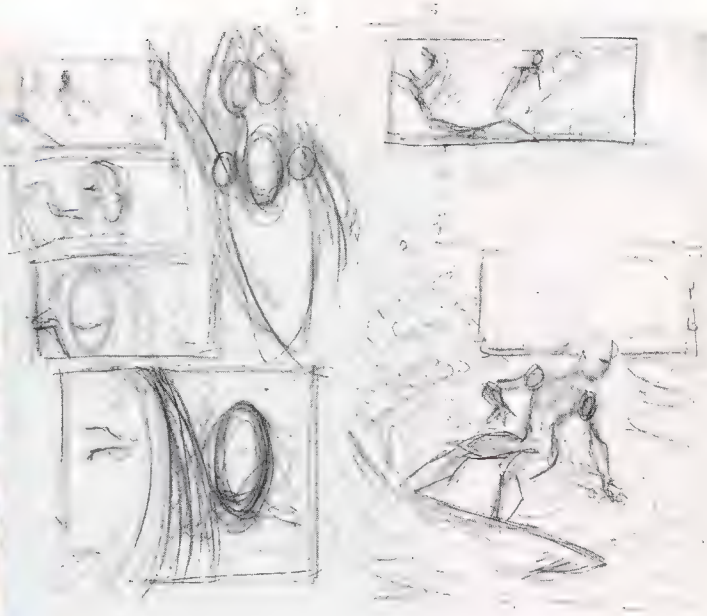
Here's the original design for the self-contained suits the DMD worker guys will be wearing. They'll be down about 1,200 feet, so at this depth, the main concern is cold. The suits are designed for warmth, while the "tail" will help propel the guy in the suit.

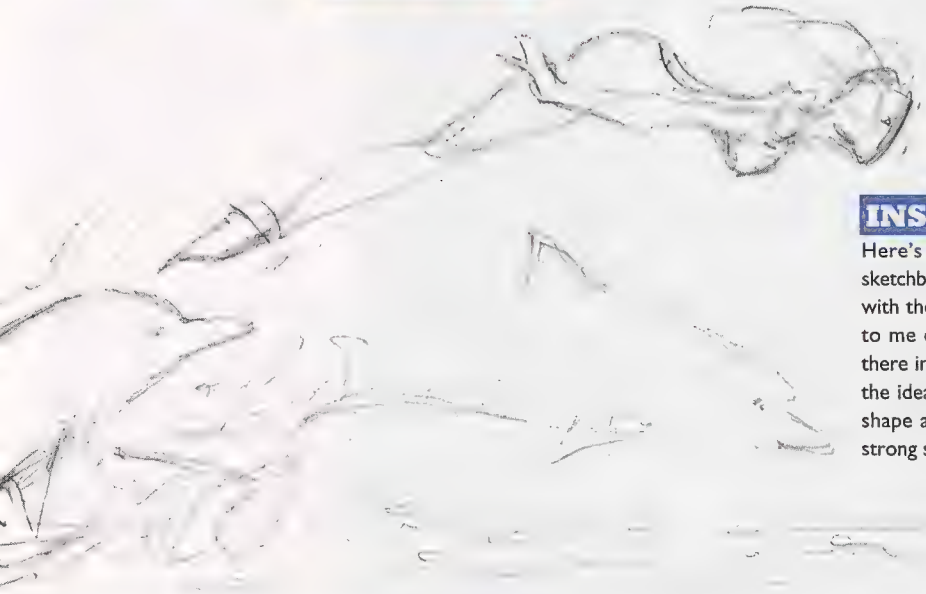
THE PROCESS

LAYOUTS

Like I said, I try not to repeat my panel layouts. Yes, it does get harder and harder as I go along, so I keep records. I actually laid out the entire #0 issue on the plane ride back from the Orlando Megacon in March. Pages 4 and 5 came out very similar to the finished pages.







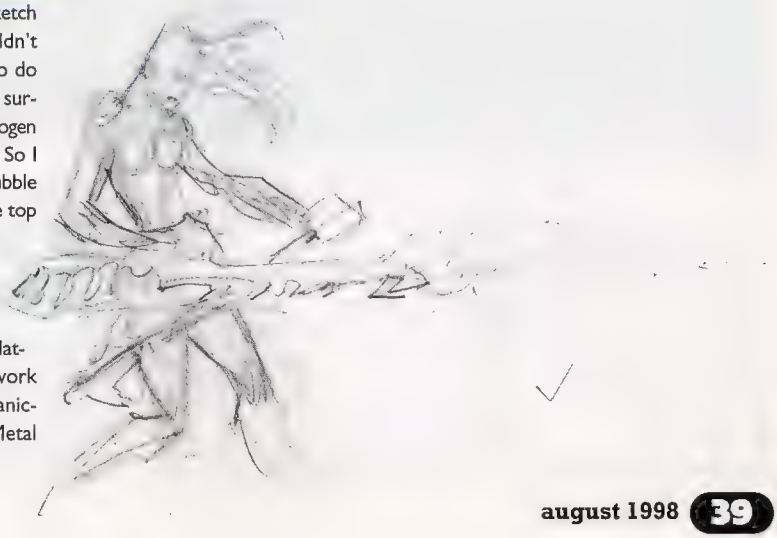
INSPIRATION

Here's a good example of why I keep my sketchbook next to the bed. Aspen swimming with the dolphins is an image that just came to me one morning. I woke up and it was there in my mind, so I put it on paper. I like the idea of giving her the same streamlined shape as a dolphin. You just know she's a strong swimmer when she's drawn like that.

ACTION!

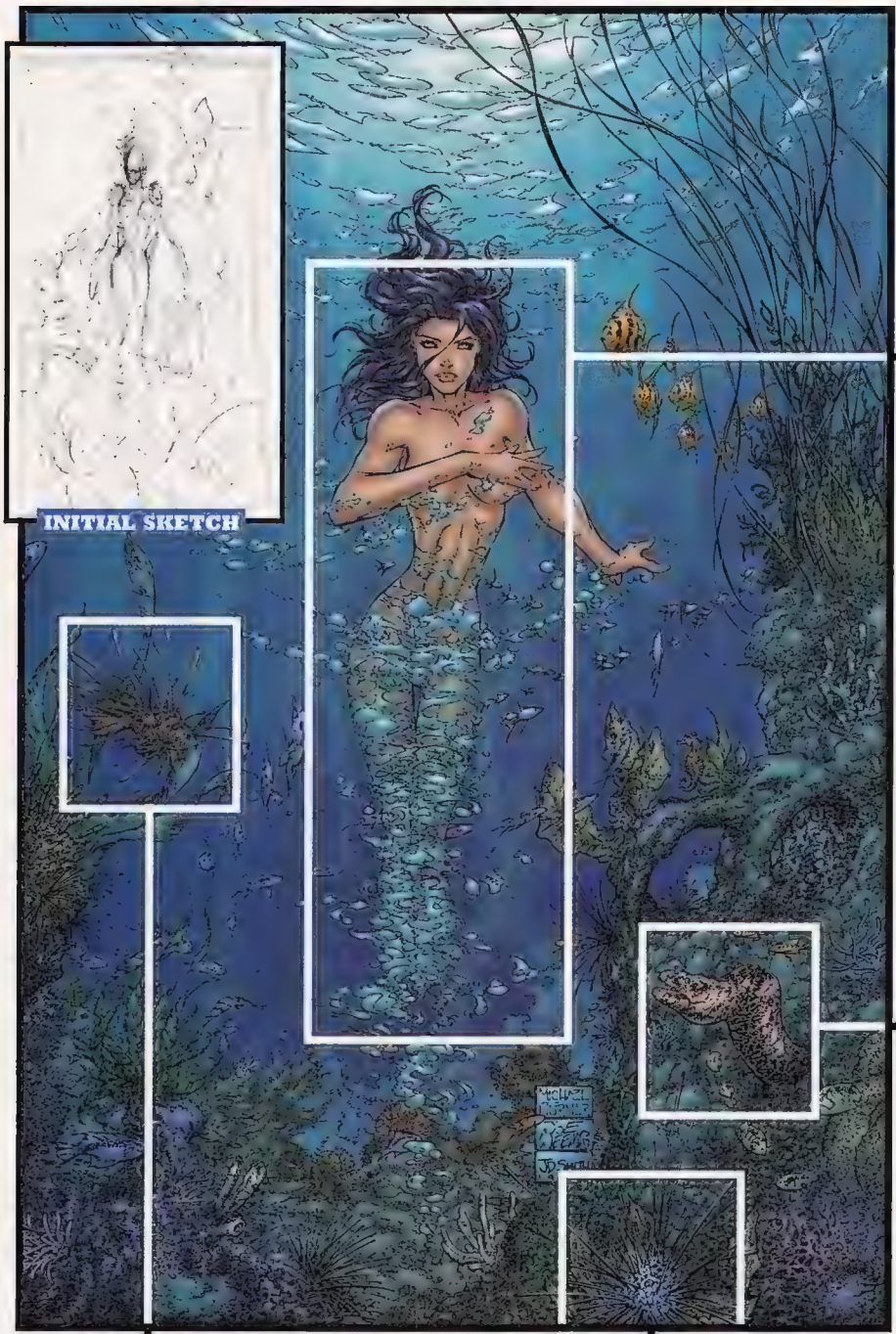
Action events! Everyone needs 'em! I wanted to sketch the idea of Aspen rescuing someone who couldn't breathe underwater. The easiest thing for her to do would be just to rush them to the top. But if you surface too quickly, the change in pressure will form nitrogen bubbles in your bloodstream, which can kill you. So I drew Aspen using her powers to form an air bubble around herself so she could bring someone to the top slowly, evening out the pressure. This is definitely something I'll have to work into an early issue.

Here's my first try at those guns the underwater race will be using to shoot compressed water. Everything has to operate off a different platform, since gunpowder and combustion won't work underwater. I want to make the guns really organic-looking, so I'm going with a kind of coral look. Metal won't do—it'd rust.



THE COVER

Here's a piece I'm pretty proud of—one of the three covers to *Fathom* #1. All the things you see here? They're pretty much the same things I see when I go diving. (Except the woman, of course.)



Aspen herself, we soon find out, has powers. She can make herself one with the water. So I've drawn her here where she's at that point of change in a transformation. Problem is, I couldn't think of anything she'd be wearing that'd look real. So she's not too...discreet. (Okay, she's naked.) In my original rough, her arms were down at her sides, which wouldn't fly as a cover. I definitely didn't want three strands of hair covering her up, and a fish that just happened to be darting in front of her would look real stupid. Someone suggested seashells over her breasts, but that's way too "Little Mermaid." So I came up with this little arm motion, which I think looks graceful.

Down in the lower right, coming out of the coral, is a moray eel. They usually hang out in the coral and poke their heads out to snag small fish. They really aren't mean, but they sure look it. They open their mouths when they breathe, showing off a lot of teeth.

You rarely see one out of the coral, but a moray swam past me once when I was on a dive. It was freakin' huge! It looked like a 7-foot snake and it scared the hell out of me. But they're fun to draw. I'll keep 'em on the page where I can handle them.

The reddish guy halfway up the left side is a scorpion fish. Now *they're* pretty mean. They'll eat anything they can, and sometimes they'll even go right after divers. I like drawing the scorpion fish, but they're pretty elaborate. Fortunately, they're not a schooling fish. They're loners.

The blackish spikey things on the bottom are sea urchins. I've been stung by them and it hurts like hell. Those spines are poisonous and you swell up when they sting you. Problem is, the cure for their poison is almost worse than the poison itself. (I'll let you look up the antidote.)

So there's a look inside my head, a place few people—not even the people I work with at the studio—get to go. And what have we learned? At least three things I can think of. First, an artist's sketchbook is his friend. Second, you should avoid sea urchins at all costs. And third, writing these things really makes me hungry. Think I'll go for seafood tonight.

Michael Turner can't fathom how you wouldn't like his new book. Get it? The book is Fathom *and he can't "fathom" it? Ah, never mind.*

These mean quality.

So do these.

· Ascension · The Darkness · Fathom · Spirit of the Tao · Witchblade ·
· Tales of the Darkness · Tales of the Witchblade ·

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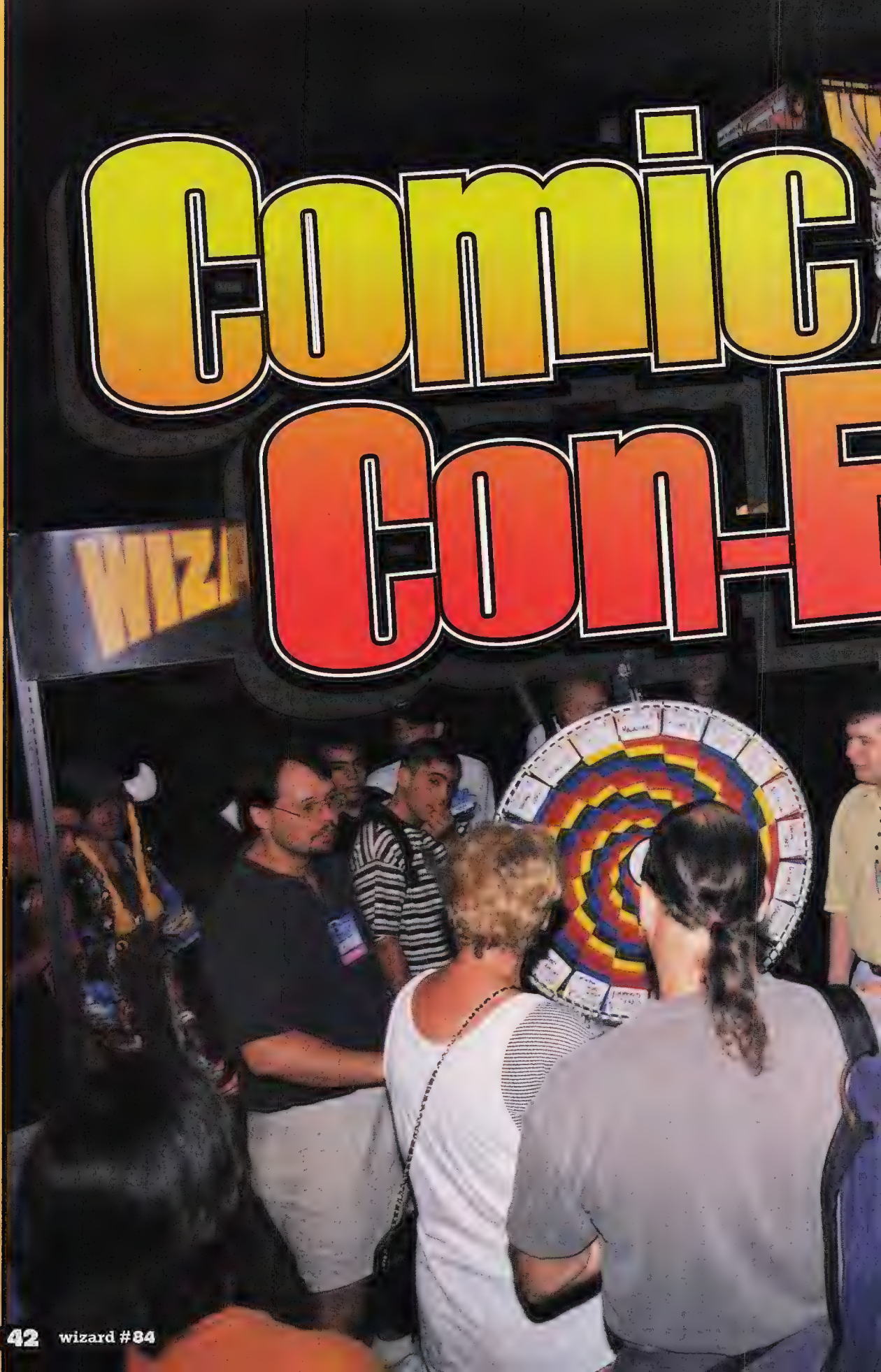
Comic Con-E



Wizard's Comic Convention Survival Guide

By The Wizard Staff

idential

OPENING PHOTO BY MITCHELL MADDOX

So you're goin' to a comic book convention. Big deal. Well, yeah it is! Comic cons ain't just a bunch of comic shops thrown together under one roof, they're like a big honkin' carnival. Sure there are more dealers there than there are X-titles, but that's only the beginning.

Music. Celebrities. Prizes. Babes in skimpy outfits. Bad food. It's all there for the asking. And yeah, there are tons of dealers selling everything from comics to toys to...lunch boxes. Yep, things can get pretty darn intimidating if you're not prepared. That's where we come in. Wizard's put together its very own "Comic Con Survival Guide" to help you get through the grueling convention months. If you're a convention "newbie," this guide'll definitely keep you from getting shell-shocked at your first con. And even if you've been to a dozen shows already, read on. Heck, you might even learn something.

DON'T BE AN IDIOT

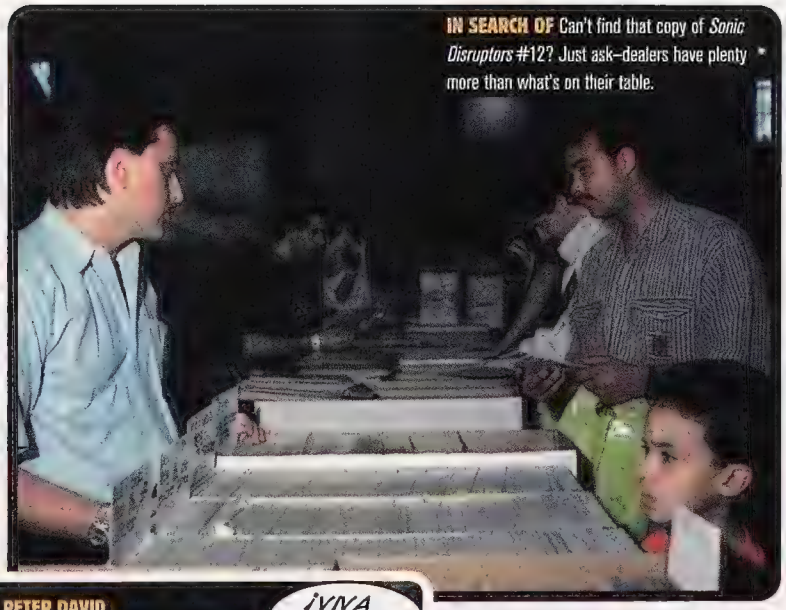
Sure, that chromium *Darkness* #11 for $20 looks like a steal, but relax. Walk around a while and don't just settle for the first thing ya see. No, you might not find a comic cheaper, but how crappy wouldja feel if you shelled out 20 clams for something, and someone else had it for 10 bucks just two tables down? Also, bringing a price guide's a good way to keep tabs on whether you're getting ripped off or not. And when you find a table you like, write down the booth number so you can easily find it later.

GET ON YER KNEES

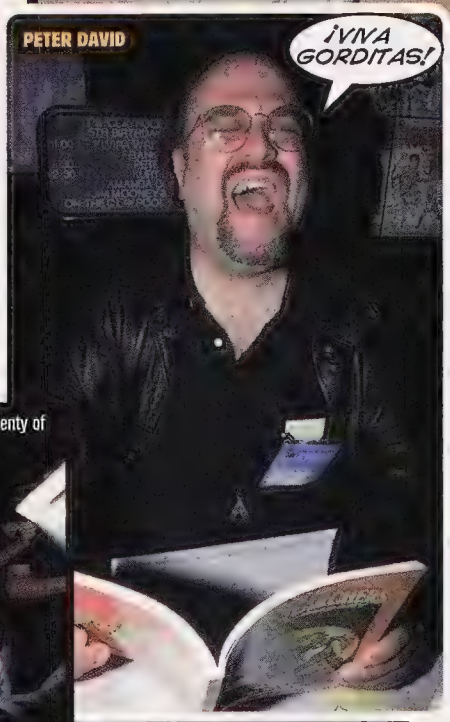
Check out the bargain bins. Those're the quarter boxes most dealers have piled underneath their tables. Sure, you'll find more than enough copies of *Alf*, *Boof and the Bruise Crew* and *Dakota North*, but you also might uncover some old key *Avengers*, *Daredevil* or even *Uncanny X-Men* issues. You just never know what you'll find.

HALF-NAKED CHICKS

Conventions are gleeful freak-fests. You're gonna meet way too many costumed joes, scantily clad babes and tons of your favorite creators. So bring a camera. How else are you gonna prove to your friends that you actually stood next to the Vampirella model?



IN SEARCH OF Can't find that copy of *Sonic Disruptors* #12? Just ask–dealers have plenty more than what's on their table.



CROWDED HOUSE Expect plenty of pushing and poking.

TATTOO YOU Support your favorite character by permanently scarring your body.

SO...WHERE DO I PEE?

Trust us, the most important thing to do when you arrive at a con is to find the friggin' bathroom! Nuthin' sucks more than being smack dab in the middle of a fanboy feeding frenzy at Todd McFarlane's booth when nature calls and you've got no clue where to answer it!

And hey, wash those hands even if nature doesn't call—frequently. Odds are, you're gonna shake a lot of creators' hands who've shaken a lot of hands already. We don't want anyone to get ebola or anything.

TOUCH IT

Open up comics *before* you buy 'em, especially the expensive ones! That *Amazing Spider-Man* #46 may look gorgeous on the outside, but page 16 could have a coupon (or one of those cool Mighty Marvel stamps) cut out of it. Always ask a dealer first, though, before ripping open a bag. And be SUPER careful when you take out and handle the book. You rip it, you buy it! (Beware of that evil thing called "tape"!) Heck, you might even wanna ask the dealer to take the comic outta the bag for ya. If you don't see the exact comic (or condition) you're lookin' for, just ask. Most dealers have tons of extra books hidden away that they just don't have room to show.

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

No, it's not Marvel's "New Universe." But anything can and probably *will* happen at a show. Dress comfortably (broken-in shoes, short-sleeve T-shirt, etc.), 'cause the air

PHOTOS BY MITCHELL HADDAD, PAUL SCHIRALDI AND JOSEPH SCHUYLER.

conditioning might conk out. Keep your eyes peeled—sometimes you'll actually meet REAL celebrities (not just comic ones) such as "Simpsons" creator Matt Groening, pseudo-actor Jean Claude Van Damme, or even that wacky wrestler Warrior. And don't be surprised to find more than just comics at a comic convention. There'll be loads more stuff than you think—from toys to videos to movie posters to costumed models.

WHERE DO I KEEP MY CRAP?

Like the Boy Scouts, always come prepared. Bring a backpack so's ya can store all the comics and toys you're gonna buy. If you're buyin' by the boxload, one o' those hand carts will do wonders for your back. And if you're planning on buying posters or original art, bring along poster tubes and two heavy pieces of cardboard (a large FedEx box does the trick) to keep 'em safe.

YOU BREAK IT, YOU BOUGHT IT

Statues kick ass. (Particularly just about everything at Randy Bowen's table!) Toys are tons of fun. (The Moore Action Collectible table's got some gorgeous figures.) But alla these things are fragile (read: they break easily!), so if it's on display, ask before grabbin' it in yer grubby paws! And for heaven's sake, be gentle or you're gonna end up spending a lot o' dough for a broken toy.

WILL WORK FOR FOOD

Lines too long at the Top Cow booth? Keep missing Jim Lee over by WildStorm? Well, if you're havin' trouble meetin' yer favorite

HANDS OFF They're real...and they're spectacular. (The models, that is.)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT Don't even think about it.

HALL OF FAME If you're real nice, maybe you'll get Kevin Smith (left) and Jay's autographs.

ALL EARS When Jim Lee rips apart your artwork, you better listen!

In the Bag

Convention Portfolio Review 101

Besides buyin' all sorts o' neat junk, conventions are a great place to get yourself noticed. Lots of companies (particularly Marvel and DC) set up special portfolio review areas, where they look at your artwork. But if you're seriously considering a career in comics, take the review process seriously. Here are some pointers:

- **BRING A PORTFOLIO CASE** to show off your artwork. It doesn't have to be a fancy leather-bound one. Just make sure your art samples are organized in a nice, neat package. You want to show the reviewer that you care about your work.
- **BRING PLENTY OF PHOTOCOPIES** of each page. That way you can give out samples to a bunch of editors. Just make sure that *every* page is clearly marked with your name, address and phone number.
- **QUALITY, NOT QUANTITY.** Make sure you bring your best work. And don't just bring big pin-ups; bring sample pages that tell a panel-to-panel story.
- **USE PROFESSIONAL TOOLS.** Colored pencils on loose leaf paper ain't gonna cut it. You should really invest in the right art tools. Besides high quality pens and pencils, use bristol board paper just like most artists do.
- **START OFF STRONG.** Put your best work up front to kick off your portfolio with a bang. You should also end on a strong piece, 'cause it's generally open the longest during the review's discussion.
- **DO YOUR THING.** If you wanna be a penciler, show pencil art. If you wanna be an inker, show your ink work with a copy of the pencils; otherwise, how're reviewers gonna know you did a good job with the pencil art?
- **DON'T WASTE THEIR TIME.** Half-finished artwork gets a half-finished critique and is an automatic turn-off for many reviewers. Sketch pages just ain't portfolio material.
- **BE HUMBLE.** Remember this is a critique session, so there'll be plenty of criticism. Don't argue a reviewer's point. Listen...and learn.

artists, take a walk back to "Artists Alley." Not only is there tons of up-and-coming talent there, but you'll be surprised at some of the bigger names just hangin' out. Best of all, there's rarely any lines!

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?!?

Make a plan, Stan. Before you get to a show, decide exactly *why* you're going. Is it for back issues? Autographs? Toys? The food? (Yeah, right.) Then make a list of exactly what you're lookin' for. Just be sure to cross off things as you buy 'em so you don't accidentally get the same comic twice! (It happens!) When you first get to a show, grab a program and highlight all the events you wanna go to, including autograph times. Some creators are only there for a few hours, and if you miss 'em, it's sorry, Charlie.

DON'T LEAVE!

On full-weekend shows (like Comic Con International at San Diego and Wizard World Chicago), don't assume Sundays are weak days. Sure, there's less merchandise and the hottest books are probably long gone, but there's a lot fewer people around and you'll find some amazing bargains! (Many dealers really hate taking stuff back home with 'em.)

SIGN HERE

Getting an autograph can take forever. But there are things you can do to help cut down line time. Besides getting there early, take your comics outta the bag while you're waiting on line, instead of when you finally make it to the front. Bring along extra markers and pens, and make sure the creator who's signing your book actually *worked* on the issue he's signing. (You'd be surprised...) Some artists even draw li'l sketches, but if you want a more elaborate one it'll usually cost roughly $20 (and you'll probably have to come back for it later in the day). It's also a good idea to bring a sketchbook with you, to protect your sketches and keep 'em all collected between two covers.

FREE STUFF

Who doesn't like free crap? Well, comic conventions are full of it! You'll find everything from buttons to stickers to comic previews. But ask first before grabbin' what's on someone's table, 'cause it might actually be for sale!

DON'T RUN WITH SCISSORS

Hey, it's good advice!

SHOW ME THE MONEY

Most dealers only accept cash, so come prepared. And don't rely on ATMs at the convention center or even your hotel. Those suckers run dry *real* fast (sometimes even on the first day of the show). Your best bet is to hit a bank before you head out to the con.

DON'T BE A JERK

Courtesy is highly underrated. Conventions get pretty crowded, so don't be surprised if you're bumped around a bit as you walk the floors. And when looking through a dealer's stuff, keep your books off his table so other fanboys can look around.

As for creators, treat them like you'd want to be treated. If you see guys like Frank Miller or Jim Lee walking the floor or eating lunch, don't assault them for autographs or sketches. They've got specific signing and panel times where you can see 'em, so show a little respect.

That's about it. You should be all primed and ready to embark on your comic con tour of duty. Just remember to bathe, use deodorant and brush your teeth. Unless, of course, you want to fit in.

The Wizard staff went through three weeks of brutal survival camp to prepare this guide. Three men went AWOL during a "Godzilla" screening and have yet to resurface.

On the Road

Wanna know when and where this year's biggest comic cons are happenin'? Just cast yer eyes below:

Heroes Con
Charlotte, N.C.
July 3-5

Wizard World
Chicago, Ill.
July 17-19

Cleveland Comic Con
Cleveland, Ohio
August 1-2

Comic-Con International
San Diego, Calif.
August 13-16

Motor City Comic Con
Dearborn, Mich.
October 10-11

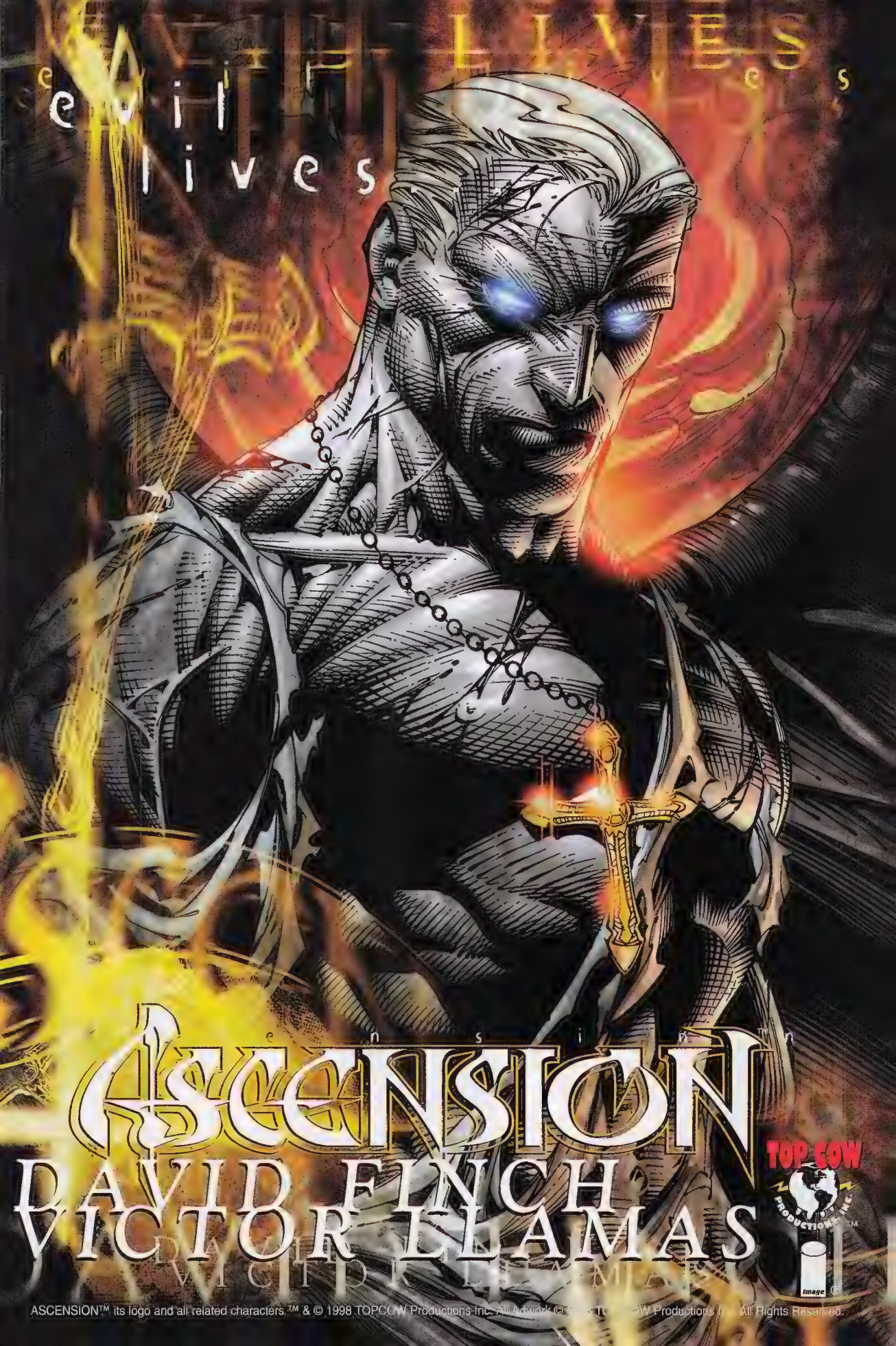
Mid-Ohio Con
Columbus, Ohio
November 28-29

THIS BITES When you're sick o' convention food...improvise.

MILLER TIME Be polite. Don't bug artists like Frank Miller when they're just walking the floor.

SIGN OF THE TIMES Artist Joe Madureira likes signing comics...especially when he actually drew them.

EXPENSIVE BOUNTY Break it and you're out a lot of credits.



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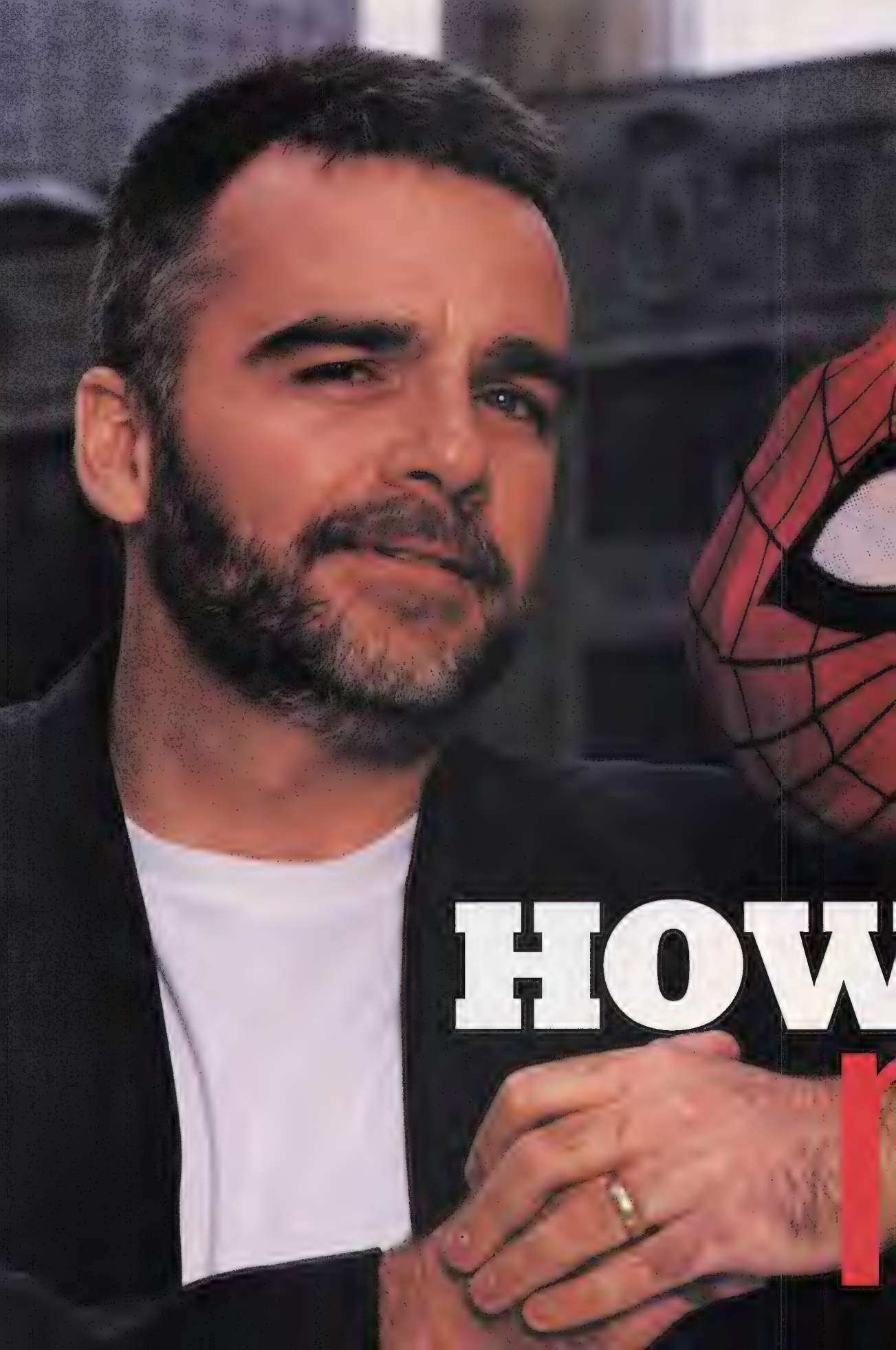
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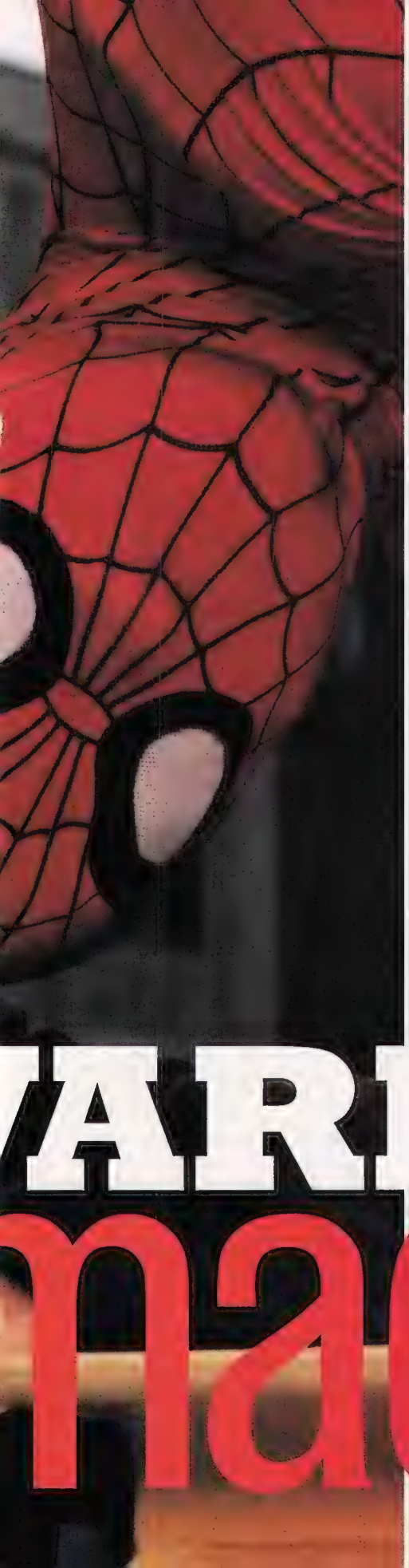


THE WIZARD Q&A

BY MATTHEW SENREICH • PHOTOS BY PAUL SCHIRALDI

Howard Mackie does not want to be here.

After being bashed by the fan press for his part in the much-maligned "Spider-Man Clone" storyline, an interview inside Marvel's 11th floor conference room probably appeals to Mackie about as much as a root canal.

Rocking back and forth in his chair, Mackie pensively awaits the first question. His black sports jacket still on, Mackie shows no sign of settling in and getting comfortable.

"You guys never wanted to talk to me when I was doing that 'Clone Saga' thing," Mackie jokes, a hint of resentment creeping into his voice. "It's nothing personal, but you can't help but feel this way when all you see about yourself is negative press for a story that's been over for years now."

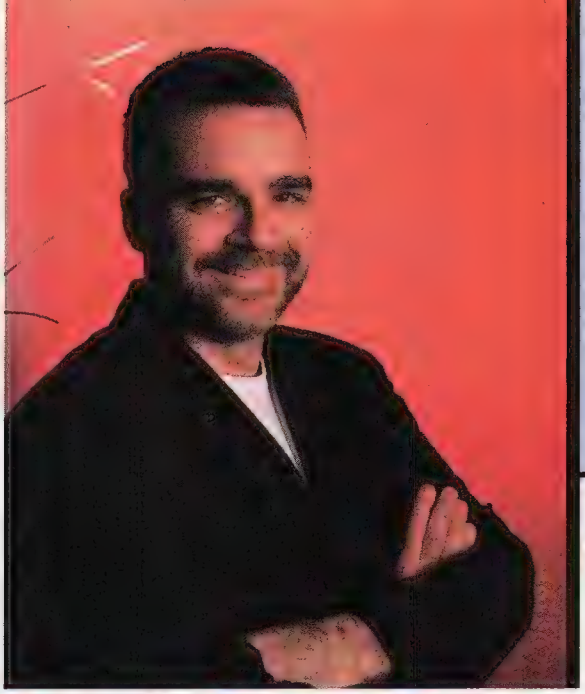
"That 'Clone Saga' thing" exploded onto fandom in 1994, which revealed Peter Parker to be a cloned impostor for the past 20 years of continuity and replaced him with the "true" Spidey, Ben Reilly. Over the course of the controversial two-year storyline, Mackie and his Spider-partners were harshly criticized and the bad feelings have stuck with Marvel's flagship hero, even after it was revealed in late 1996 that the supposed clone was actually the real McCoy.

"I realize the 'Clone Saga' sucked," Mackie says, gritting his teeth, "but it was a story. And a story that is now well over. Can't we move on?"

Mackie's ready to move on, and so is Marvel, placing the fate of Spidey in Mackie's hands. Come September, Marvel will "end" the Spider-Man saga and boil a four-man Spider-Man writing team down to a single champion in November, namely Mackie. Now Mackie's The

Standing tall as the lone Spider-Man writer, **HOWARD MACKIE** tries to put the controversial 'Clone Saga' behind him

ARD mackie



VITAL STATS

OCCUPATION: Writer of *Peter Parker: Spider-Man* and *X-Factor*. Adds *Amazing Spider-Man* in November.

BORN: Jan. 22, 1958, in Brooklyn, N.Y.

BASE OF OPERATIONS: Upstate New York

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS: Former Marvel editor of *Avengers*-related titles before pursuing freelance writing with a five-year writing stint on *Ghost Rider*. Began writing Spider-Man with *Web of Spider-Man* in 1992, took a brief hiatus, then jumped onto *Spider-Man* (now *Peter Parker*) in 1994, which he continues to write. In November, he becomes the sole writer of *Peter Parker* and *Amazing Spider-Man*.

FAVORITE SPIDEY SUPPORTING CAST MEMBER: Favorite Spidey Supporting Cast Member: "Besides New York City, J. Jonah Jameson. He's Peter Parker *and* Spider-Man's arch-nemesis."

"I realize the 'Clone Saga' sucked, but it was a story. And a story that is now well over. Can't we move on?"

Man, solely responsible for spinning Spidey's webs. Working with top-notch artists John Romita Jr. on *Peter Parker: Spider-Man* and John Byrne on *Amazing Spider-Man*, Mackie journeys into new territory as he relaunches Marvel's most recognizable web-slinger into the new millennium. "It's a lot of pressure," admits Mackie. "But I love Spider-Man...and probably more than you guys at *Wizard* who write all of the articles saying that I don't."

Mackie understands that Spider-Man's future sits squarely on his shoulders. With one hand on his dangling sunglasses, the other tapping the table, Mackie's eyes locate and fix upon the tape recorder sitting atop the circular conference-room table. Click. The red light goes on...

WIZARD: Now that you're the sole Spider-Man writer, what will you do differently? Do you have more freedom now?

MACKIE: Before I was not only restricted by editors, but also restricted by my fellow writers. I was doing one of four Spider-Man titles. It's hard when one month I'll have an issue where Spidey's battling Sentinels in New York City, then in another title he's dying of a deadly neuro-toxin. Continuity is very important. If Peter had a cold or he broke his arm, he'd be sneezing or have his arm in a cast in the next issue. That's a minor thing, but it's important to create a cohesive continuity again in Spider-Man that you can only do between two books with one writer.

Come November, what are your plans for Spider-Man?

It's going to be a new beginning. November will start off with things being okay for Peter Parker for the first time in many years. When we end the Spider-Man story, in September, we're talking about giving a happy ending to Peter Parker instead of his parents coming back and turning out to be model decoys. His clone won't return. Everybody won't die. Somebody won't return from the dead and so on. We're setting things up so Peter Parker will have a life again. From there, as with any good drama, we'll see how we can start taking the rug out from under him. I don't know how much I can give away. But you should know that, in the past, we've done a lot of things with the classic Spider-Man villains and my tendencies are to shy away from doing that exclusively. We've seen too many stories with those characters and it becomes redundant to tell the next "Greatest Electro" or "Greatest Doc Ock" story ever told. I have no intention of dropping Spidey's rogues gallery, but rather [I will] use those characters to move forward.

You say Spider-Man will have a happy ending in September. Why do something like that?

Because it really hasn't been done and because we get a lot of grief every time we do anything negative. Somewhere along the line people started getting it in their mind that the only way to do anything of any impact or importance was to tear down our characters. When that was first being done it was great and the exception to the rule. Frank Miller's Daredevil story, "Born Again" [*Daredevil* #227-#232], blew me away because when that came out nothing like that had been done. Now you've seen it done over and over again. It's like a faded photocopy. The trick is to let the guy get a break for a change, but don't give him too much, because Peter Parker is always the underdog. When I say a happy ending, he's not going to be perfect and suddenly be discovered as the love child of Bill Gates. I'm talking about not tearing away at another part of his fragile soul. [*Laughs*]

No one's dying?

Did I say that? [*Laughs*] Maybe.

And when Spider-Man returns in November, will he be Peter Parker?

Yes. In his regular costume.

And what of Mary Jane?

She's his wife. She's sticking around.

Do you think Mary Jane and Peter Parker's marriage makes Peter less relatable to the average fan? How do you overcome that?

You'll have to read in the following year. It's something that we've wrestled with *ad nauseam*. It's a tough situation because he's married to this beautiful, former model. That distances him from the tar-

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"We're now attempting to strengthen the Spider-Man franchise by pulling it in and seeing what we can do to build it up rather than expanding outward."

get audience. I'm not talking about the core audience. Do we write the book to the fans who have been with the book for "x" number of years? Or do we target who we think the new fans are, which should be much younger than our core audience? Either way, you run the risk of alienating one or the other. So, what are the options? The options are you keep him status quo. He's married to Mary Jane and they go on with their life. Do you have them get divorced? How does that change it? He's now known as Peter Parker, divorced guy. That would be no closer to our fans. Do you kill her? Again, you run the risk of alienating the core audience and you run the risk of making him Peter Parker, widower. Let's just say it's something we're thinking about and plan to deal with.

How are you going to distinguish *Amazing Spider-Man* from *Peter Parker: Spider-Man*?

I'd like to get back to the days of self-contained issues. There'll be subplots that carry through, but something happens in an issue and it'll be a beginning, middle and end. Maybe once a quarter the two books will crossover. It'll be the stylistic differences in the art that lend itself to the differences in the types of stories I tell with each title. Currently, working with John [Romita Jr.] on *Peter Parker* tends to deal more on a street level in which we feature the underworld characters. Working with John [Byrne] on *Amazing*, I work toward his strength of penciling cool spandex costume-type villains, more in the vein of what Stan Lee and Steve [Ditko] did in the earliest runs of Spider-Man.

Speaking of John Byrne, how will *Twice Told Tales* affect your ongoing Spidey titles if at all?

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Byrne's 13-issue mini-series, launching in October, retells Spider-Man's origin.]

It will affect it, but not concurrently. *Twice Told Tales* will retell the earliest Spider-Man stories and allow us to insert some things in Spidey's early days to be picked up on later. Without changing history drastically, John will set up in the past what we will explore in the stories that take place in the present. But I want to allow time for John to set things up before I go explaining it.

So something like Doctor Octopus tying into the origin of Spidey...

Yes. It's not going to immediately pick up, but if he's now tied in with the origin, he's tied in with Spider-Man. During the run of *Twice Told Tales*, you're going to see Electro or Doc Ock and the rest of Spidey's core rogues gallery primarily in that series. The problem that we've run into recently is overexposure. What I'd like to do is let John handle those characters and give his new takes, new designs and such on the characters. Then I'll let them sit there for a little while and see how it impacts the present.

What other villains will you use?

I want to utilize the classic villains to introduce new villains. That's not to say it will strictly be new villains. Kingpin is coming back. Spider-Man has a great rogues gallery, [but] for years those characters have been used and overused. I'd like to let John restore a little luster to those characters. I like Venom as a villain and I'll use him at some point.

What about the supporting cast or cameos from other heroes?

I have a soft spot in my heart for all that, but I don't want to do a Spider-Man joining the Avengers story. Been there, done that. To me, the most important supporting cast member of the Spider-Man books is Manhattan itself. Think how important the city and the skyline is. To that end, if something is going on in one of the other books anywhere in the Marvel Universe, that should be reflected in Spider-Man.

Why do you believe Marvel is going with one guy?

Spider-Man is very different from anything else Marvel does. It's more akin to what DC does with *Batman* and *Superman*, which is one character carrying multiple books. Those books were created in a different industry, an industry that would support multiple books for one character. From a story point of view, any one year of Spider-Man is equivalent to four years of any other title. And we've wanted to cut down the amount of books for a while now. But for business reasons, they didn't want to do that. Eventually, logical good sense won out. You start getting into redundancies where you're using a character over and over again. You go, "Hydroman hasn't been used in Peter Parker for awhile so let's do him." It starts feeling old more quickly than another book. Just

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10 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT SPIDER-MAN

Boxers or briefs?
Says Spider-writer Howard Mackie, "It must be briefs under that costume, otherwise you'd get wrinkles."

How old was Peter when he became Spider-Man?
16

What type of spider bit Peter Parker?
An American house spider.

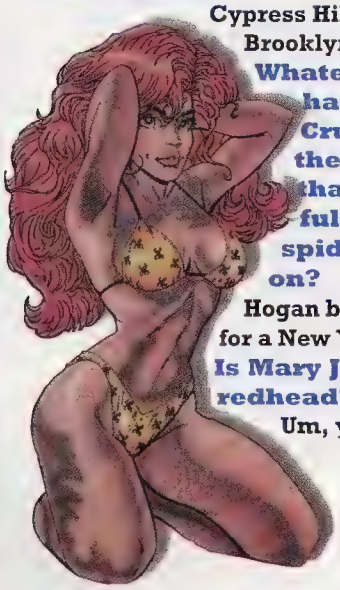
What's Pete's take from the Daily Bugle?
Around $100 a photograph.

Major in college?
Bio-chemistry

Favorite food?
"Aunt May's hotcake [recipe]," says Mackie.

Where was Peter Parker born?
Queens, N.Y.

Where are Uncle Ben and Aunt May buried?
Cypress Hill Cemetery, Brooklyn, N.Y.



Whatever happened to Crusher Hogan, the wrestler that Pete first fully tested his spider-powers on?
Hogan became a janitor for a New York City gym.

Is Mary Jane a true redhead?
Um, yes.

coordinating four Spider-Man books was a logistical nightmare, despite the fact that there's a great working relationship with all the writers. We're now attempting to strengthen the Spider-Man franchise by pulling it in and seeing what we can do to build it up rather than expanding outward.

What do you think went wrong with Spider-Man to make sales slip to the point change was necessary, and when do you think it went wrong?
I don't want to say the "Clone Saga," but I think it does come back to that for a number of reasons. The "Clone Saga" was a risk. First we had to convince each other that it was the right way to go, and then we had to convince the editorial team. It was conceived as a six-month storyline. In. Out. Done. It had a definitive ending and there was a back door. But we encountered problems after the story began. There were editorial hesitations. Some of the stuff presented by the writers was, God forbid, radical. Then there were changes internally at Marvel and that's when the editorial voices started coming into play. Despite what everybody thinks, sales on the initial run of the "Clone Saga" were up. And it came at a time when the industry was heading down. With Spider-Man sales up and staying steady, the editorial department was told to stretch it. Us writers were not big fans of that. But it was our job to stretch it. And all of a sudden new editorial voices came in and they didn't like where the story was going. So then it was months and months of deliberations. Four-hour telephone conferences. All of us were trying to figure out how to end it and make the editors happy. If you look at it, there were some good stories in there, but there was no sense of forward movement because there wasn't any. We no longer knew where we were heading. And somewhere [along the way] the "Clone Saga" has become the catch phrase for all that is wrong in everything, not only comics. World War III will be caused by the "Clone Saga." It wasn't that there were bad decisions; the problem was there were no decisions being made.

If you saw what was happening, why did you stay?
Because the writers who are involved with Spider-Man have a genuine love for the character. We started a story which began to spin out of control. And we were committed to salvaging it from the ashes. Did it work? Only history will tell, but we kept hoping that somebody editorially would say that we had to act. Were there times when I was ready to leave? Absolutely. But I stuck it out because I enjoy writing Spider-Man. And I know I can do it well when I can do my stories. I was waiting for the editors to let me have my chance as opposed to just going by what they said. [Writing Spider-Man] is the biggest kick of my day.

Do you think when you start up in November fans will be able to shake the "Clone Saga"?
I hope so, because the "Clone Saga" is done. There are few remnants left and by the end of this storyline there'll be even less. The bottom line is the "Clone Saga" was a storyline that went on too long. But it was exactly that, a storyline. These characters exist in a fictional world and you move beyond it. That's what we are trying to do, move beyond a storyline which was not received as favorably as we would've liked it to have been.

What will be your take on the Spider-Man books come November?
They are books about a guy who wants to have fun and there are all these obstacles thrown in his way that try to prevent him from having fun. But he has fun anyway. A "happy ending" [in September] sounds too cutesy. It's a fun ending. Peter Parker won't be weighed down with a whole bunch of baggage going into the next year…or the next era.

In addition to Spider-Man, what other projects do you have in store?
Y'know, I really don't want to talk about them right now. I'm focused on Spider-Man. This interview has been all about Spider-Man and I think we should keep it to that. I want fans to know that all my energy is focused on Spider-Man first. He's that important to me.

Recently, staff writer Matthew Senreich tried interviewing J. Jonah Jameson. He regrets wearing that Spider-Man t-shirt.

MARVEL

July Highlights from the House of Ideas!

On sale July 1

- ☐ **Cable #58**
  "Persecution" Part 1. Art by Ed McGuinness!
- ☐ **Captain America: Sentinel of Liberty #1**
  Mark Waid! Ron Garney! You know the hero... now know the legends!
- ☐ **Captain America: The Classic Years TPB**
  Classic Cap by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby!
- ☐ **Daredevil #379**
  "Flying Blind" Part 4 of 4!
- ☐ **Fantastic Four #9**
  Spider-Man & The Human Torch together!
- ☐ **Ka-Zar #17**
  Ka-Zar joins America's Most Wanted!
- ☐ **Maverick #12**
  The end! The double-sized last issue!
- ☐ **Rampaging Hulk #2 (A&B)**
  Think "Crash Course" at Bruce's Alma Mater!
- ☐ **Sensational Spider-Man #31**
  Rhino attacks!
- ☐ **Sunfire & Big Hero 6 #1**
  Sunfire's dying... the question is, are Big Hero 6 the good guys? By Lobdell, Vasquez and LaRosa!
- ☐ **Thor #3**
  A day in the life of Jake Olson, who's dead!
- ☐ **Uncanny X-Men #359**
  The return of Rogue!
- ☐ **X-Men: The Manga #12**
  Wolverine vs. Sabretooth!

On sale July 8

- ☐ **Alpha Flight #14**
  The mourning after!
- ☐ **The Amazing Spider-Man #438 (Biweekly in July)**
  Spidey vs. Daredevil!
- ☐ **Doctor Who #267**
  The official prescription for a "fix" of the Doctor!
- ☐ **Generation X #42**
  No more powers means no more hope!
- ☐ **Iron Man #8**
  Shell-Head's secret identity exposed!
- ☐ **Marvel Adventures #18**
  Featuring Captain America!
- ☐ **Marvel Universe #4**
  Starring The Monster Hunters!
- ☐ **Spider-Man: The Manga #18**
  Spider-Man's investigation turns up more trouble!
- ☐ **The Uncanny X-Men/ The Fantastic Four '98**
  Psycho drama at the hands of Psycho-Man! By Joe Casey and Paul Pelletier!
- ☐ **X-Factor #149**
  Polaris and The Multiple Man are back!

On sale July 15

- ☐ **Captain America #9**
  The "American Nightmare" begins!
- ☐ **Excalibur #124**
  Three on the team prepare for a major change!
- ☐ **Heroes For Hire #15**
  The Siege Of Wundagore begins... by John Ostrander and Pasqual Ferry!
- ☐ **Incredible Hulk # 468**
  Joe Casey (of CABLE fame) begins!
- ☐ **Peter Parker, Spider-Man #95**
  Trapped in an elevator with Norman!
- ☐ **Seeker 3000 #4 (of 4)**
  The fate of humanity hangs in the balance!
- ☐ **Strange Tales #1**
  The House of Ideas gets haunted! Featuring Man-Thing and The Werewolf by Night! 64 pgs.!
- ☐ **Thor #1: Roughcut Edition**
  Dan Jurgens' plot! John Romita Jr.'s pencils!
- ☐ **Thunderbolts #18**
  Are they villains again?
- ☐ **What If?! #112**
  Starring Ka-Zar The Savage!
- ☐ **X-Man #42**
  Hunted by leprechauns?!?
- ☐ **X-Men #79**
  Cannonball leaves the team!

On sale July 22

- ☐ **The Avengers/ Squadron Supreme '98**
  It's the most dangerous game... on two worlds! By Busiek, Carlos Pacheco, & Batt!
- ☐ **Deadpool #20**
  Against "Ghosts Of The Past!"
- ☐ **Iron Fist #3 (of 3)**
  The conclusion!
- ☐ **Iron Man: The Iron Age #2 (of 2)**
  The cataclysmic climax!
- ☐ **The Spectacular Spider-Man #260**
  Hobgoblin vs. the Green Goblin! The finale!
- ☐ **Wolverine #128**
  What's happened to Sabretooth?
- ☐ **X-Men: The Manga #13**
  Abducted in Genosha!
- ☐ **X-Men Unlimited #20**
  Starring Generation X!

On sale July 29

- ☐ **Amazing Spider-Man #439 (Biweekly in July)**
  The once and future Spider-Man?
- ☐ **Avengers #8**
  The first appearance of a new Avenger?!
- ☐ **Conan: The Return of Styrm #1 (of 3)**
  The return of the dragon!
- ☐ **Marvel #4**
  The new official monthly catalog!
- ☐ **Nighthawk #1**
  To get to Heaven, Kyle Richmond's about to go through Hell! By Jim Krueger and Rich Case!

Cover to NIGHTHAWK #1

- ☐ **Quicksilver #11**
  The Siege Of Wundagore continues! By Ostrander, Edkin, Derec Aucoin and Rich Faber!
- ☐ **Silver Surfer #143**
  Art by Denys Cowan!
- ☐ **Spider-Man: The Manga #19**
  Under siege at the beach!
- ☐ **Squadron Supreme: New World Order**
  These heroes for justice are out of their league! By Len Kaminski and Anthony Williams!
- ☐ **X-Force #81**
  Free Bound-In Poster!

MARVEL COMICS

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POWER PLAYERS 25

PRESENTING THE 25 MOST POWERFUL PEOPLE IN COMICS TODAY

HEY, we all love comic characters. Superman can move planets and Spider-Man has saved the day a million times. But neither hero can do a *thing* until a real, flesh-and-blood-type person puts them into action. The *true* superpowers? They belong to the people who write, draw, edit and sell comics, and shape the way the public thinks about comic books.

That's what we have here: The 25 biggest movers and shakers in comics, the guys with the most impact, based on what they do *today*. Granted, we wouldn't be here if Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster hadn't created Superman. This conversation wouldn't be taking place if Stan Lee and Jack Kirby didn't give birth to the Marvel Universe. But today power takes on new forms, and is concentrated in different hands–some you might not expect.

Wanna know who's *really* got the power? Read on...

BY THE WIZARD STAFF

MACKIE

25 HOWARD MACKIE

POSITION OF POWER: Writer of both ongoing, continuity-based Spidey titles: *Amazing Spider-Man* and *Peter Parker: Spider-Man*

WHY HE'S #25: He holds the future of Marvel's flagship character in the palm of his hand.

Spider-Man has been through some serious ups and downs over the past seven years and Mackie–who's been a regular Spider-writer for most of that period–has played a big part. Now, as Spider-Man is set for a fresh start in November with a pared-down line under his guidance, Mackie plays the *only* part as the character's sole writer.

Spider-Man storylines–like the infamous "Clone Saga" of which Mackie was a part–have taken their lumps. It's up to Mackie to make people happy once again about one of Marvel's more enduring mainstays.

It's a great responsibility. And to paraphrase Spidey himself, with great responsibility comes great power.

24 ALAN MOORE

POSITION OF POWER: Writer, innovator and the guy every creator wants to work with

WHY HE'S #24: He's a talent magnet. One of the most influential comic book writers ever (see 1986-87's classic *Watchmen*), Moore still holds sway over today's young talent, having lured such artists as Alex Ross, Steve Skroce and Brandon Peterson to work with him at the fledgling Awesome Entertainment. By using literary devices seen in classic fiction (like irony and symbolism), Moore's history-making résumé helped legitimize a serious creative approach on comics that still shows today. Talented creators now flock to him, hoping to be part of the next time Moore makes history.

Artists are currently lining up to work with Moore on his new line of books at WildStorm Productions. Wherever Moore jumps, people follow because whatever he writes, people will most certainly read.

MOORE

STARKINGS

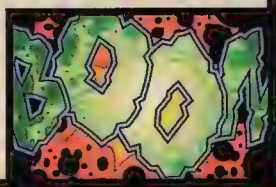
23 RICHARD STARKINGS

POSITION OF POWER: Letterer, packager and designer for more than 50 comics a month, including Marvel's entire X-Men and Spider-Man lines

WHY HE'S #23: Chances are, if you read it, he wrote it. Or lettered it, at least.

Richard Starkings created a computer font based on his own handwriting in 1992 and pioneered the concept of computer lettering, now an industry standard. Through Starkings' innovation, both the time and expense involved in lettering comics were cut, helping keep costs down.

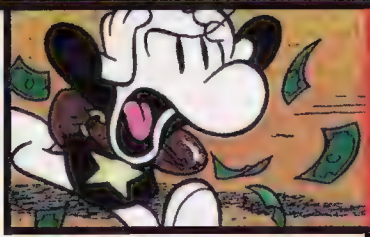
From there, Starkings and his company, Comicraft, expanded. Comicraft now designs letters pages, ads, recap pages and sometimes even an entire line of books for some publishers. And the innovations continue. Starkings now creates distinct fonts based on specific creators' handwriting. Joe Madureira's *Battle Chasers*, for example, has lettering based on Madureira's handwriting. Through Starkings, all comics now have the chance to stand out individually, and the formerly obscure job of lettering is now looked at as an art.

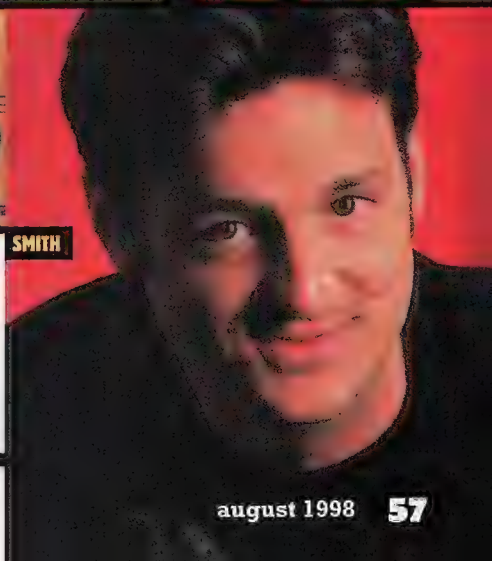


22 JEFF SMITH

POSITION OF POWER: *Bone* creator/writer/artist and most recognized small-press creator

WHY HE'S #22: Jeff Smith is the standard-bearer for everyone with a pencil and a dream.




SMITH

Smith's self-published *Bone* is a rags-to-riches story, enjoying sales, success and merchandise spin-offs rarely seen by an independent book.

Because of this, Smith has become the ambassador for the "small press," making tons of appearances at conventions and comic stores, and lending aid to other indy publishers where he can. If Smith contributes a cover or a pin-up to your book, you've got a shot.

After taking *Bone* to Image Comics for two years, Smith returned the title to his own Cartoon Books in 1997 to remain true to his roots. By his example, Smith keeps alive an entire segment of publishing.

If you've got $100 and a Kinko's around the corner, Smith is there to tell you that you can make it.

MACKIE, SMITH BY PAUL SCHIRALDI, STARKINGS COURTESY COMICRAFT; MOORE BY BOB MARTIN

21 THE TEAM OF BURNETT, DINI & TIMM

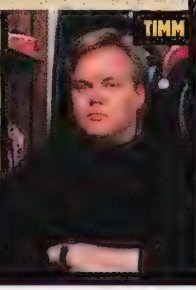
POSITION OF POWER: Creators/producers of the "Batman" and "Superman" cartoons and the upcoming "Batman Tomorrow" cartoon

WHY THEY'RE #21: Maybe 100,000 people a month read *Batman* or *Superman*. More than two million people a *week* watch "The New Batman/Superman Adventures." Alan Burnett, Paul Dini and Bruce Timm produce, write and design the public perception of DC's two biggest guns. When a new generation of readers come to comics, it'll be a generation raised on the trio's square-jawed, barrel-chested animated characters.

Or maybe the new readers have already arrived. Mr. Freeze, retooled in the original "Batman: The Animated Series" cartoon, was the villain in the latest Bat-flick. Harley Quinn, one of Bats' most popular supporting characters, was *born* in the cartoon. The animated art "style" developed by this trio is being adopted in comics everywhere, from *Young Heroes in Love* to *Marvel Adventures*. Burnett, Dini and Timm represent the future, and the future is now.

BURNETT

DINI


TIMM

20 DAN JURGENS

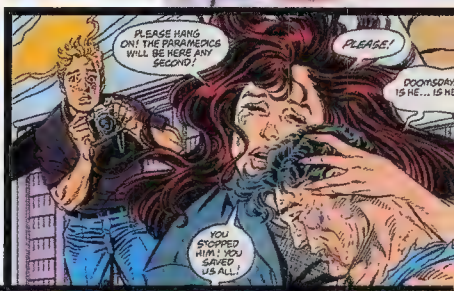
POSITION OF POWER: Writer of *Thor* and *Superman*; king of major comics events like the "Death of Superman" and *Zero Hour*

WHY HE'S #20: He writes. He draws. He sells. More than any other pro, Dan Jurgens brings a marketing angle to creating comics. Comics, remember, is a business. And events sell. With Jurgens, you don't just get stories–you get EVENTS.

Both DC (see: *Zero Hour*, a mini-series and #0-issue event that crossed DC's entire Universe) and Marvel (see: *Sensational Spider-Man*, a new title created especially for Jurgens to write and draw) have given Jurgens license to create massive, sweeping stories that have affected multiple titles. And the landmark "Death of Superman" in *Superman* #75? It's more than coincidence that Jurgens both wrote and penciled that issue.

Today, Jurgens writes DC's *Superman* and Marvel's *Thor*, steering two heavy-hitting titles. And Jurgens' "Tangent" concept he created for DC? It's back for a second run in 1998. Dan Jurgens' big-event influence continues today.

JURGENS



19 MIKE CARLIN

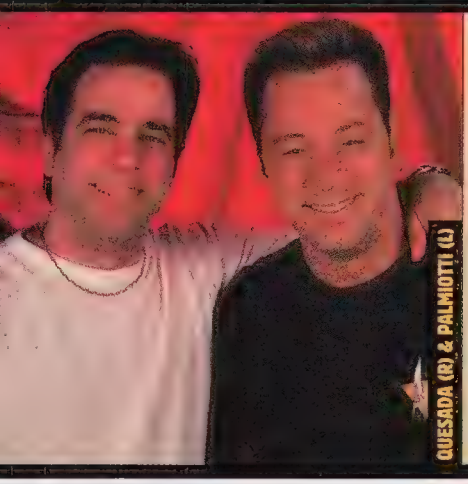
POSITION OF POWER: Executive editor, DC Comics

WHY HE'S #19: He's the puppet-master of the theater that is the DC Universe. Got a pitch for a new DC superhero project? Carlin's the man to go to. He gives the green light or the red light on new titles, new directions for heroes and new crossovers.

And Carlin's approval can mean a lot. He spearheaded *Marvel versus DC* on the DC end, a runaway hit that united 30-year competitors and led to a number of spin-off projects.

Carlin is also DC's continuity cop, approving or rejecting character appearances in DC titles other than their own, and even reviewing "Batman/Superman Adventures" cartoon scripts to make sure they make sense. As the man who effectively serves as editor-in-chief of the DC Universe line, Carlin is the editorial watchdog with big bite.

CARLIN


QUESADA (R) & PALMIOTTI (L)

18 THE TEAM OF QUESADA & PALMIOTTI

POSITION OF POWER: Writers, artists; point men for "Marvel Knights"; the best-connected creators in the business

WHY THEY'RE #18: Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti have a playground in the Marvel Universe all their own: "Marvel Knights," a line where the duo "package" four books a month, launching established Marvel characters in new directions come September. Quesada, one of comics' most dynamic pencilers, will draw the line's big gun, *Daredevil*. Palmiotti, the busiest inker in comics, not only lends his skills to *Daredevil* but also brings his many pro connections to "Knights." Director/screenwriter Kevin Smith is one of them, tapped to pen *Daredevil* (vol. 2) #1-#6.

Quesada and Palmiotti will act as editors for what is essentially the research and development wing of the No. 1 comic publisher, bringing new spins to titles and new creators to spin them. When fresh things happen at Marvel, they'll transpire under the cover of Knight.

CARLIN BY PAUL SCHRADER. BURNETT, TIMM COURTESY WARNER BROS.; JURGENS BY WIZARD; DINI COURTESY DINI

17 CHRIS CLAREMONT

POSITION OF POWER: Vice-president and editorial director, Marvel Comics

WHY HE'S #17: Chris Claremont sits on a lofty perch: He's the right-hand man of Marvel Editor-in-Chief Bob Harras. Claremont reviews every new proposal that comes through Marvel. And if a writer can't be found where a need exists, Claremont may jump on a project himself. He's currently filling in on *Wolverine*, and took over from Scott Lobdell on *Fantastic Four*, where he will be running the affairs of Marvel's *first* team for at least the next two years.

As Marvel's No. 2 editorial authority, Claremont uses the language he played an integral role in creating. In his 17-year run on *Uncanny X-Men*, Claremont not only moved Marvel's mutants from a property on the brink of cancellation to the juggernaut of the industry, but he also helped create the deep personal relationships between teammates still seen in the entire X-Men line and titles like DC's top-selling *JLA*.

CLAREMONT

ENNIS

16 GARTH ENNIS

POSITION OF POWER: Writer of *Preacher*, *Hitman*; shining star of Vertigo who makes hyper-violence entertaining

WHY HE'S #16: Ennis is the Quentin Tarantino of comics. By coming up with new ways to shock–but still delight–readers every month on his creator-owned *Preacher* and the DC Universe *Hitman*, the Northern Irish writer has made over-the-top violence and dark humor mainstream.

Anyone can do gross. Any writer can come up with violent situations. Ennis does it within the context of critically acclaimed stories. It's shock without schlock, weaving the bizarre into tightly crafted tales that compel the reader. *Preacher* has become the rock of DC's Vertigo line, and Ennis' name helped launch Top Cow Productions' *The Darkness*, another hit title.

Since his American comics debut in 1991, Ennis has consistently moved the line of what is acceptable in comics each month. And no reader can guess what he's going to pull off next.

15 GRANT MORRISON

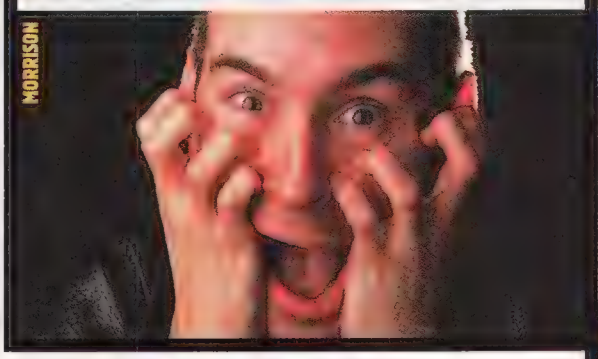
POSITION OF POWER: Writer of *JLA*, DC's best-selling title

WHY HE'S #15: Grant Morrison spins superheroes his own way, and fans love it.

Morrison brings an offbeat, occasionally surreal level of thought to comics. He focuses on brains, not brawn, even in superheroes. The JLA's Atom gets through a villain's force field when he realizes that the villain can *see* him–because light can penetrate the field, the microscopic Atom rides a light beam through. Morrison's non-traditional stories and solutions are moving things away from slugfests and expanding the ground of what happens in superhero comics.

Because of *JLA*'s massive popularity, the team recently expanded from seven to 14 members in a controversial move. Why? Morrison wanted it that way.

And DC wanted Morrison. When Morrison started working for other publishers, DC knew enough of Morrison's importance to ink him with an exclusive contract.


MORRISON

14 KEVIN SMITH

POSITION OF POWER: Filmmaker, screenwriter, comic store owner whose self-professed love of comics brings fandom to the masses

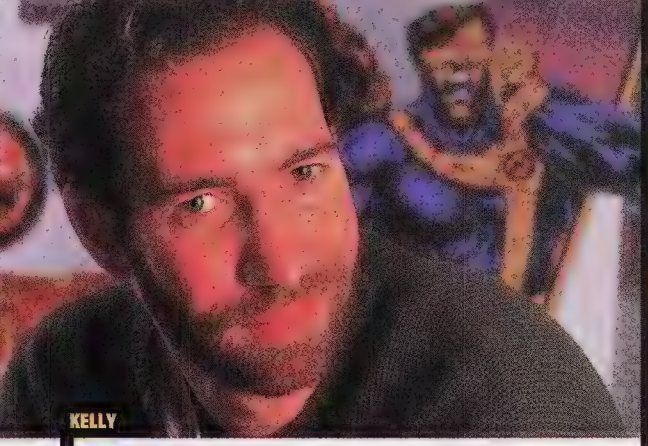
WHY HE'S #14: One man takes comics to a mass audience every day, and his name is Kevin Smith.

In major-release movies he's written and directed ("Clerks," "Mallrats" and "Chasing Amy"), Smith has worn a badge of comic fandom with pride. His movies gush with comic references, so much so that he was tapped by Warner Bros. to write a screenplay for an upcoming Superman movie (his draft has since been scrapped). Playing off his celebrity status, Smith has preached the comic gospel on MTV and in *Time*. And since his movies have been popular out in the real world, he's cool in the real world. By association, Smith helps make being a comic fan cool.

In the comic world, Smith will write a six-issue relaunch of *Daredevil* beginning in September and DC's *Green Arrow* in 1999. And in the meantime? He's telling anyone who will listen that his upcoming movie, "Dogma," is heavily inspired by comics.

SMITH

CLAREMONT BY JOE SCHIFFLER. ENNIS BY MAUREEN McTIGUE. MORRISON BY BOB MARTIN. SMITH BY CRAIG BLANKENHORN



KELLY

13 JOE KELLY

POSITION OF POWER: Writer of *X-Men*, *Deadpool*

WHY HE'S #13: At age 27, Joe Kelly represents the future of comic writing.

Uproarious humor and real-life dialogue are the hooks Kelly utilized to bring readers into his laugh-a-minute *Deadpool*, a book that's already influenced Marvel's entire line. The "Page One" *Deadpool* recaps Kelly wrote proved so popular with readers that the publisher started doing preview gatefolds in *all* its books.

From *Deadpool*, Kelly gained access to the biggest stage of all: *X-Men*, where he's leading a revival on Marvel's premier franchise by brightening up the formerly dark mutants with witty dialogue and a lighthearted scripting style.

By bringing humor and believable dialogue back into comics–and showing that these qualities make for popular books–Kelly is moving Marvel in a lighter direction.

12 KURT BUSIEK

POSITION OF POWER: Writer of *Avengers*, *Iron Man*, *Thunderbolts*, *Astro City*

WHY HE'S #12: Isn't just plain ol' being the best storyteller in comics enough?

Even if it wasn't, Busiek would possess serious power through sheer volume: In writing three main Marvel titles featuring a boatload of characters, Busiek steers the core of the Marvel Universe more than any other single writer.

And he earned these assignments *because* he's the best storyteller in comics–a man Marvel can trust to write the characters near and dear to the hearts of readers everywhere. His intimate, up-close-and-personal style draws in readers, both fan *and* pro.

In particular, Busiek's creator-owned *Astro City*, his non-Marvel gig, gets rave reviews in the creative community and inspires fellow comic writers who devour it for Busiek's characterizations. He's the one writer that all other comic writers read month in and month out.

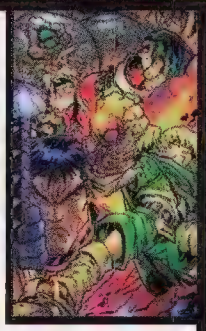
BUSIEK

MADUREIRA

11 JOE MADUREIRA

POSITION OF POWER: Writer/artist, *Battle Chasers*; the man who integrated manga into American comics

WHY HE'S #11: Madureira is revolutionizing comic art for the new millennium.



Madureira started penciling *Uncanny X-Men* five years ago with his first love in tow: manga. Many didn't believe an unknown artist could pull readers in with a Japanese spin, but fans responded loudly: They liked this new guy and his new style. Manga is now more accepted than ever in the United States, largely because of Madureira's mainstream influence.

After *Uncanny*, Madureira wrote his own ticket and proved that he just might have stronger drawing power than *anyone* else in the business. His creator-owned *Battle Chasers*, a completely unknown property, was a nationwide sellout in *less* than 24 hours. *Battle Chasers* has great buzz, as Madureira brings his newest twist: a sword-and-sorcery fantasy feel that–chances are–will be his next great revolution.

10 STEVE MILO

POSITION OF POWER: President of Another Universe comic stores, mail-order and online subscriptions; combined, his stores sell more comics than any other retail store chain

WHY HE'S #10: He's got the biggest checkbook in the business and can make or break a title.

Steve Milo's Another Universe comic stores dot the Washington, D.C., area. But more importantly, Milo's the mail-order king. From 1994 to 1996, many comic stores closed shop as business got tough. Fans without local stores turned to Milo, who sent out huge catalog mailings, gaining thousands of new customers. Ever on the cutting edge, Milo was first on the online bandwagon, and anotheruniverse.com is now ringing up big bucks.

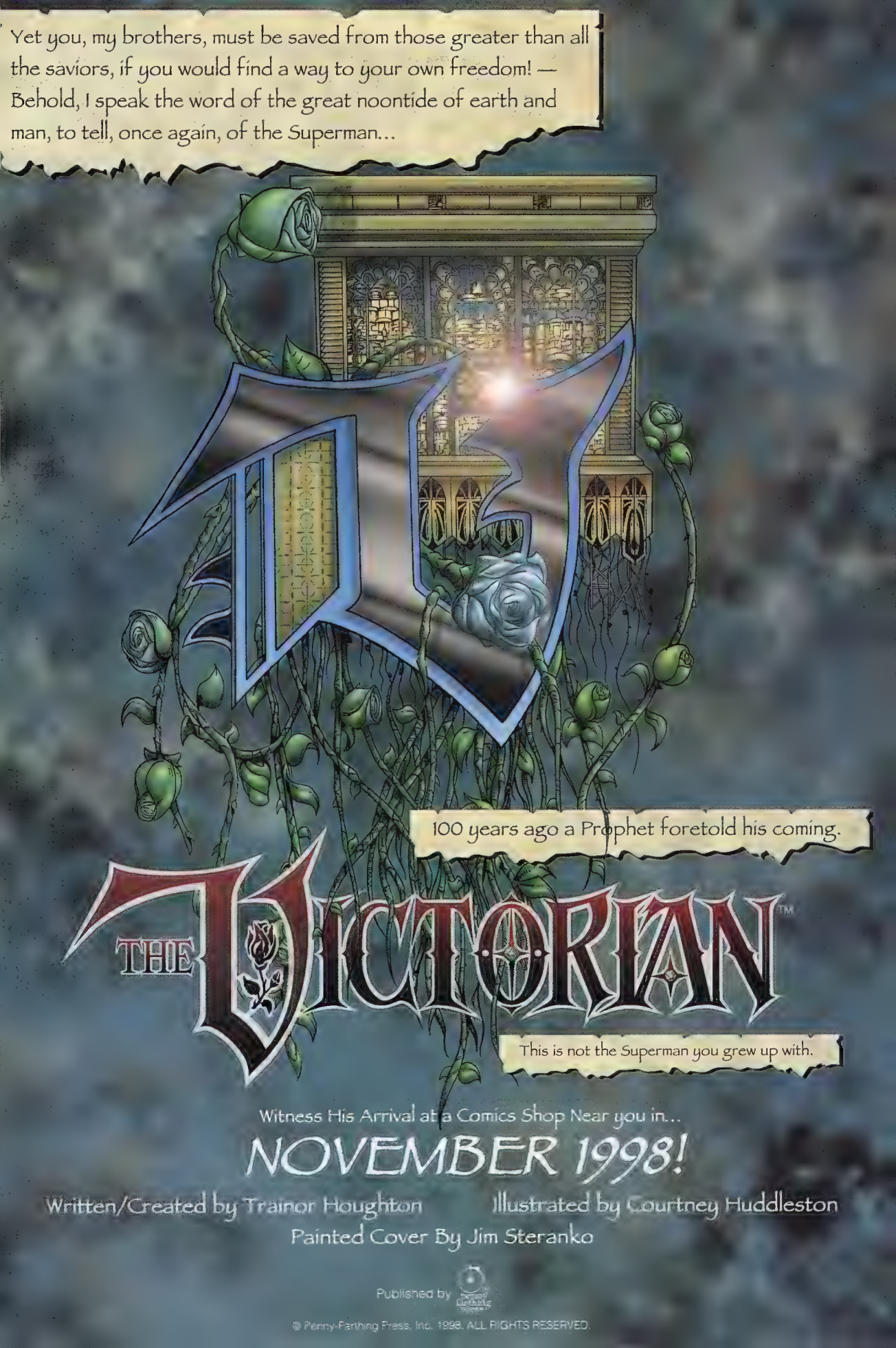
Industry estimates place Milo's orders at approximately 10 percent of the entire comic business. A strong order from Milo can keep a title afloat; a weak order could spell its cancellation.

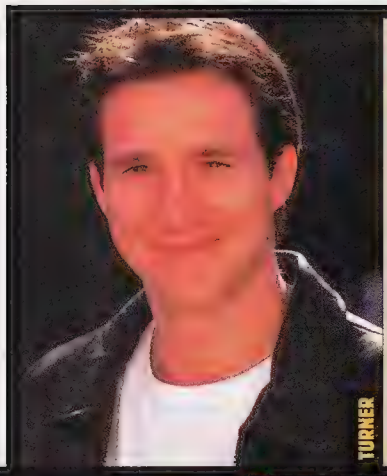
This ordering power also gets him exclusive covers and sometimes even exclusive stories–yet another reason many collectors shop Another Universe.

MILO

KELLY, BUSIEK BY PAUL SCHRAUB; MADUREIRA BY SARAH MEE; MILO COURTESY ANOTHER UNIVERSE

Yet you, my brothers, must be saved from those greater than all the saviors, if you would find a way to your own freedom! — Behold, I speak the word of the great noontide of earth and man, to tell, once again, of the Superman...




TURNER

9 MICHAEL TURNER

POSITION OF POWER: Former *Witchblade* writer/artist; current *Fathom* writer/artist; comics' most coveted young talent

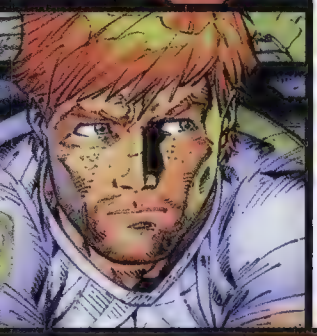
WHY HE'S #9: Michael Turner is the booster rocket that blasted Top Cow into orbit.

Virtual unknown Turner brought incredibly vivid artwork with amazing detail and stunning grace to *Witchblade* in 1995. Readers immediately responded to Turner, and *Witchblade* became the bedrock that Top Cow built its success on.

Suddenly, everything started clicking for Top Cow, and a pattern became apparent: Superheroes weren't working for the publisher. Books such as *Witchblade* were. Turner presided over Top Cow's transformation from superheroes to the supernatural.

Turner's services are now the most coveted in the industry. Top Cow even left Image when other Image branches started courting Turner. Image partner Jim Lee labored hard to get Turner into his recent "Cliffhanger" launch. But Turner is sticking where he started, now launching Top Cow's future in *Fathom*, one of 1998's most anticipated projects.

LEE



8 JIM LEE

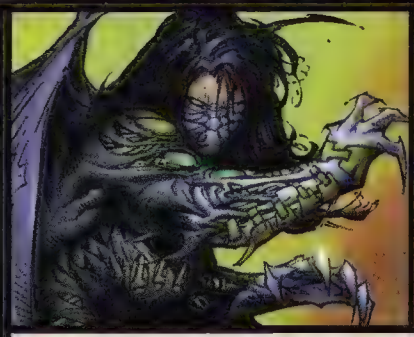
POSITION OF POWER: Artist, writer, president and publisher, WildStorm Productions

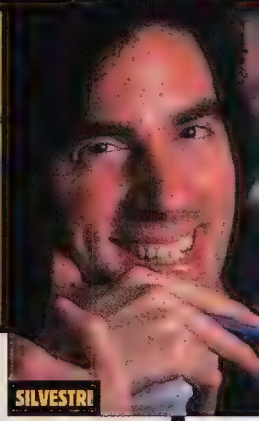
WHY HE'S #8: Jim Lee does everything someone *can* do in the comic business, and his presence is always felt.

Publisher Jim Lee has shown vision. He's branched the superhero world of WildStorm out into new areas–notably Homage Comics (a creator-owned line geared to the sophisticate crowd) and Cliffhanger (a line Lee recently founded for young, hot talent to keep his company booming).

Artist Jim Lee brought a dramatic, vivid–yet still realistic–art style to *Uncanny X-Men* in 1990 that was copied by a generation of artists and remains prevalent today.

But most importantly, Lee's name in a credit box makes any project he draws instantly bankable. *Divine Right*, the title he currently writes and draws, gains readers every month. After 11 years in a business where fame is fleeting, Jim Lee retains his golden touch. He wears many hats, and all seem to fit him nicely.




SILVESTRI

7 MARC SILVESTRI

POSITION OF POWER: Artist and chief executive officer of the industry's No. 3 publisher, Top Cow Productions

WHY HE'S #7: Top Cow is firmly established as a top-tier publisher in the business, behind only giants Marvel and DC. How did it attain this position? Marc Silvestri has run the "studio system" to perfection.

Instead of raiding costly talent from other publishers, Silvestri has taken the slow and steady approach, cultivating writers and artists internally and waiting for their talents to explode.

Three years ago, the Cow was struggling. Today, *The Darkness*–which fan-favorite Silvestri personally penciled and co-wrote for its first year–and *Witchblade* are consistent top sellers.

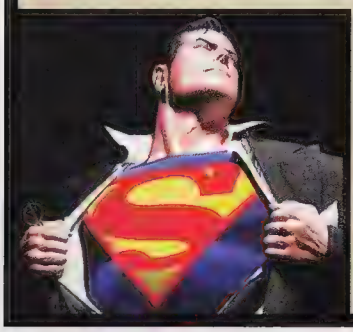
Now that Top Cow is in high gear, Silvestri is consolidating his power. Shining *Witchblade* artistic star Michael Turner (#9 on this list) has just been signed to an exclusive contract and plans a new launch. Silvestri, meanwhile, turns his attentions to Top Cow's many media projects such as TNT's upcoming live-action "Witchblade" TV series, where he may learn an all-new studio system.

TURNER, LEE, ROSS, SILVESTRI BY PAUL SCHRADER

6 ALEX ROSS

POSITION OF POWER: Creator and artist who has revolutionized painting in comics with work on *Marvels* and *Kingdom Come*

WHY HE'S #6: Ross is the 500-pound gorilla of comics: He sleeps wherever he wants. His photo-realistic painted superhero art in 1993's *Marvels* mini-series knocked comics on its ear. *Kingdom Come*, a mainstream DC follow-up, solidified his superstar position. Now he does only the jobs he wants, when he wants, how he wants.



Uncle Sam? It was well off the beaten track, but DC published it because he's *Alex Ross*. And it sold out at $5.95 a copy based on his name alone. He now gets to hand-pick the writers with whom he works, like Paul Dini on the upcoming *Superman: Peace on Earth*.

Rumor has it Ross is asking to alter Marvel's standard "Stan Lee Presents" introductory line in *Earth X*, Ross' proposed 14-issue mini-series, to include Marvel veterans Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko. Chances are, it'll happen. Because he's Alex Ross.

ROSS

saving the world is serious business.
well duh!
YOUNG JUSTICE
The new team hits the ground running in an outrageous new series by PETER DAVID, TODD NAUCK, and LARY STUCKER.
The action starts this July!
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DC
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HARRAS

5 BOB HARRAS

POSITION OF POWER: Editor-in-Chief, Marvel Comics

WHY HE'S #5: He has the first and last say on each and every comic that comes out from the top publisher.

As Marvel's editorial overseer, Bob Harras is there at the beginning: He hires creators, decides which books they're on, and approves storylines. Harras is also there at the end: He determines when rewrites and art corrections are necessary, and signs off on covers. Quite simply, you can't do anything at Marvel without going through Harras, especially on Marvel's No. 1 franchise, the X-Men line, where Harras is the former line editor and still keeps close tabs.

And Harras is always looking to hit the home run at Marvel. Some shakeups, such as the sweeping "Onslaught" crossover, worked. Others, including "Flashback Month," a retro-take on Marvel's whole line, didn't. But in each situation, Harras made bold decisions and Marvel's reputation was at stake.

Bob Harras determines how Marvel proceeds. And as Marvel goes, so goes the entire comic world.

4 STEVE GEPPI

POSITION OF POWER: President and CEO, Diamond Comic Distributors

WHY HE'S #4: If you bought a comic, he made a nickel off it.

In most cases, Steve Geppi's Diamond Distributors is the *only* way fans get their favorite comics. Many low-selling comics have no newsstand distribution. Without comic stores, they don't exist. Geppi supplies *every* comic store, providing the pipeline through which many publishers stay in business.

Geppi stands at the center of the marketplace that he transformed. He aggressively signed exclusive publishers–DC and Image included–when Marvel bought its own distributor. When the dust had cleared, Geppi had won. Marvel, unable to continue self-distribution, now distributes through Diamond. Every move Diamond makes affects what you buy and how much you pay for it.

GEPPI

Geppi is now *the* power broker of the industry. Without Marvel, there would still be DC. Without Michael Turner, there would still be Joe Madureira. Without Geppi, there would be no distribution. There would be anarchy.

3 PAUL LEVITZ

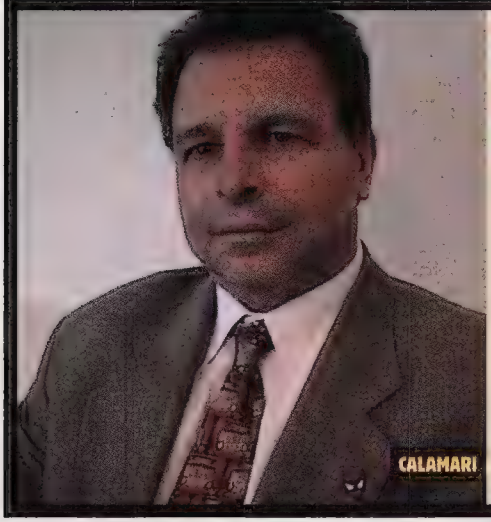
POSITION OF POWER: Executive vice-president and publisher, DC Comics

WHY HE'S #3: In every capacity from editorial to marketing, and across all lines from Vertigo to Helix to DC Universe, Paul Levitz is the hands-on boss at DC Comics.

Levitz has the experience to do it, having entered his third decade as a DC employee where he's climbed the ladder from office boy to editor to publisher. He may be a "suit" today, but he rolls up his sleeves and gets down to work, still keeping a strong hand in DC's editorial workings. Levitz periodically reviews all DC titles and critiques them for their editors, helping steer their course.

Levitz also controls all DC's business decisions as they relate to publishing. He can start a title, cancel a title, set pay rates for creators and decide in what direction DC Comics moves. Another reason he's #3? DC is the only major publisher never to give exclusives to Steve Milo (down at #10) and Another Universe. And that's Levitz's call.

LEVITZ


CALAMARI

2 JOSEPH CALAMARI

POSITION OF POWER: The No. 1 guy at the No. 1 comics publisher

WHY HE'S #2: Marvel Comics is in bankruptcy *and you don't even realize it.*

Joseph Calamari has been president of Marvel Comics for a year. And while Wall Street might not be convinced that the company is doing well, comic fans everywhere will tell you that Marvel is still on top of the heap.

Marvel books still come out every week. The "Heroes Return" books enjoy great sales. The X-Men are on an upswing. At the head of all this is Calamari, who provides leadership both on a business and a personal level. Unlike several of his predecessors, Calamari respects comics and knows that publishing them is priority one.

Under Calamari, Marvel is looking to its future in new ways. The press releases call them "strategic packaging alliances," but you call them stories you're looking forward to. Kevin Smith's *Daredevil*? Chaos! Comics on *The Supernaturals*? All part of Calamari's plan to bring new and different projects to keep Marvel moving.

HARRAS BY CRAIG BLANKENHORN; GEPPI, LEVITZ BY WIZARD; CALAMARI COURTESY MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT

UNEARTHLY POWERS

HIGH ABOVE EARTH, ALIENS MEET...WELL, ALIENS.

WARREN ELLIS CHRIS SPROUSE KEVIN NOWLAN

WILDCATS® ALIENS™

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TIME TRAVEL HAS JUST PRODUCED THE NEXT EVOLUTION OF MAN AND OF COMICS!

JOE CHIODO • JONATHAN PETERSON

THE MECHANIC

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1 TODD McFARLANE

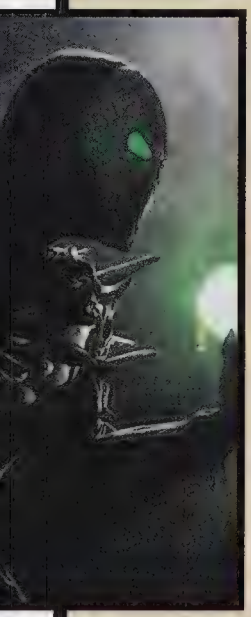
POSITION OF POWER: Entertainment entrepreneur who oversees his creation, Spawn, comics' most successful property with a top-selling comic, toy lines, an HBO animated series and a movie that took in a domestic gross of $53 million

WHY HE'S #1: When you have real power, all you need is a first name. In basketball, it's Michael. In the world of leggy supermodels, there's Cindy. Action films? Arnold. And in comics, one man is instantly recognizable by first name alone: Todd.

Todd McFarlane is more than an insanely popular creator. He's more than a shrewd businessman. He's a force. And all by himself, he's changed the way comics do business.

McFarlane debuted *Spawn* in 1992 as a monthly on high-quality paper with top-notch art and coloring for $1.95. Other publishers now follow McFarlane's lead. "Everybody now does things Todd's way," says Richard Starkings (our #23 guy). "*Spawn* just looked so much better than anything else on the racks. Everyone had to keep up." Six years later? *Spawn* is still top-shelf. And where other publishers have gone through a series of price increases, *Spawn* still comes in at $1.95.

Building on the popularity of the *Spawn* comic, McFarlane built his creator-owned character into a major industry. McFarlane has media spin-offs other creators and publishers only dream of. While others jump for joy when they sign a $2,000 development deal that might never come to pass, McFarlane sits back with a "Spawn" movie, a sequel in the works (with him possibly directing), and an ongoing HBO animated series. When other publishers lick their chops at the prospect of an action figure, Todd can look at his 10 different series of Spawn toys from his *own* company–McFarlane Toys.



The most amazing part? McFarlane has done it all himself. Even a competitor like Marvel Editor-in-Chief Bob Harras has to stop and give McFarlane his due. "Todd created an empire based on one character, and he's been the one guy behind it creatively the entire way," says Harras. "It's his vision and his vision alone, and it's worked. You've got to recognize that. You've got to respect that." McFarlane is not afraid to tell anyone that *he's* the man. When you watch the HBO series, it's not just entitled "Spawn." It's "Todd McFarlane's Spawn."

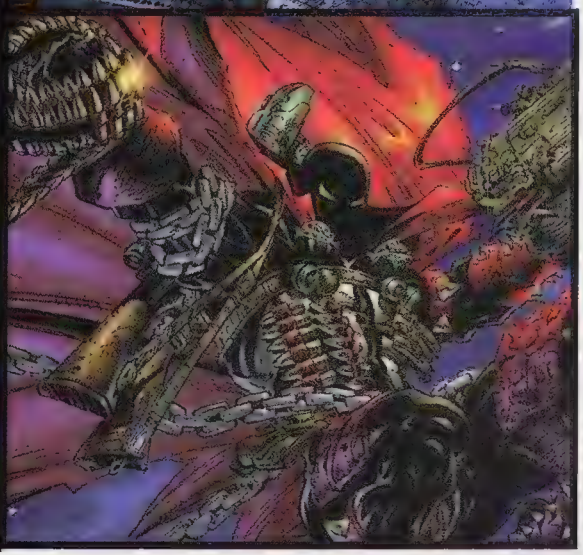
Now that Spawn is up and running hard, McFarlane is turning his attention elsewhere. He got the KISS comic and toy license based on the flamboyant rock band, and is selling *KISS: The Psycho Circus* through Suncoast Motion Picture Co. and Musicland/Sam Goody stores in massive numbers. KISS frontman Gene Simmons wouldn't go with anyone but McFarlane. "I have the utmost respect for Todd as a creator and I admire what he's done as a businessman," Simmons says. "I know KISS is in good hands with him. I want to do more work with him." And Simmons is. McFarlane is designing new logos and costumes for the band's next tour.

Not bad for a kid from the boondocks of western Canada, an image McFarlane still wears proudly with his thick accent and constant chatter about hockey. But those who know McFarlane also know that he was valedictorian of his high school class and graduated college at the tender age of 20. They think that McFarlane's "aw, shucks" demeanor just might be a cover–that he wants people to *think* he's just a country boy, so that they might underestimate him.

In reality, he just might be the smartest man in comics.

Under a yellow sun, the Wizard *staff is rendered utterly powerless when exposed to Krispy Kreme donuts.*

McFARLANE



McFARLANE PHOTO BY JIM McHUGH

THE BITCH IS BACK!
MISTRESS NYX RETURNS
MALACHY CONEY
VAMPIRELLA
LOUIS SMALL JR
Hell on Earth #1
HARRIS COMICS
MONTHLY 10
THE SHOWDOWN BEGINS SEPTEMBER!
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CASTING call

WIZARD casts the HITMAN MOVIE!

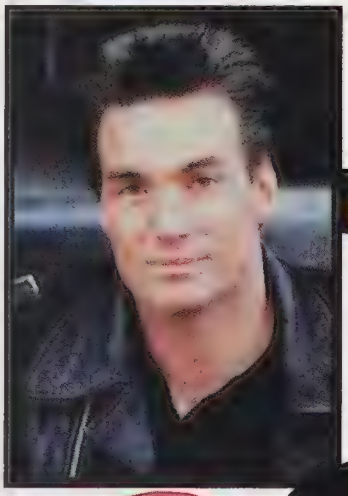
BY A BUNCH OF WIZARD STAFFERS

Remember: guns don't kill people. Hitman Tommy Monaghan kills people. And, if his story ever made it to the silver screen, well, there'd be a lot o' dead people.

A Hitman movie would see the good-hearted telepathic assassin take on Gotham City's sleaziest trash heaps. Mixing black comedy with liberal doses of crimson blood, "Hitman: The Motion Picture," would appeal to just about everyone—not just Quentin Tarantino.

Critics who dare to dislike "Hitman: The Motion Picture," would find themselves picking lead out of their livers. Comic fans who attend the movie could seriously enforce the "no talking" rule. Why, it'd be fun for the whole family (provided everyone wore bullet-proof vests). In short, the spectacle would be worth killing—or dying—for.

We'll be there, first in line. Just keep the popcorn boxes free of bullet holes and we'll be happy, happy campers.

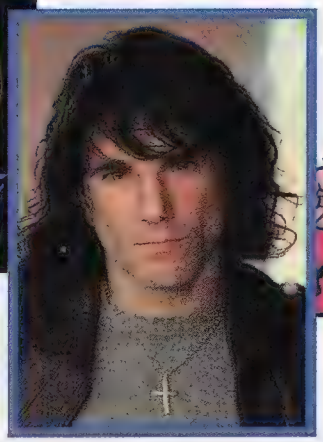


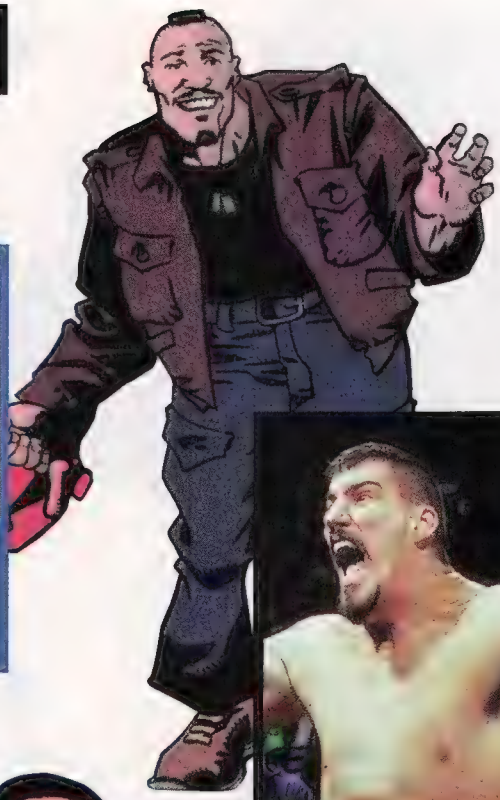
SAM JONES as **TOMMY MONAGHAN**

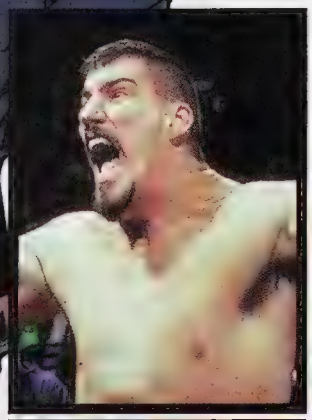
Have gun, will kill. Grizzled prettyboy Sam Jones brought a manic sense of glee to action hero Flash Gordon. And you can bet your scrawny ass he'd do the same playing Hitman Tommy Monaghan.

DANIEL DAY-LEWIS as PAT JAMES NOONAN

We'd give our left foot to see Daniel Day-Lewis ("My Left Foot") portray Sean's nephew and Hitman's very dear friend.







KURRGAN as HACKEN

Tommy's brain-dead assassin pal Hacken could step into a wrestling ring, but if he did, everyone would mistake him for the WWF's brain-dead psycho Kurrgan.

DENNIS FRANZ as SEAN NOONAN

Porky and balding, Dennis Franz is the poster boy for hard drinking. With an apron around his chunky frame, he'd easily transform into bar owner Sean Noonan.

JACKIE CHAN as RINGO

Want someone killed deader than a Kennedy? Hire the mysterious assassin Ringo. Want someone to play Ringo? Put your money on hyper-kinetic action-film mainstay Jackie Chan ("Mr. Nice Guy").

ICE-T as NATT THE HAT

Grimacing hard-core rapper-turned-actor Ice-T ("Players") is bad like a paper cut. Which is good, if we're talking about casting him as Hitman's ex-army pal Natt. And we are.

ROBIN GIVENS as DETECTIVE DEBORAH TIEGEL

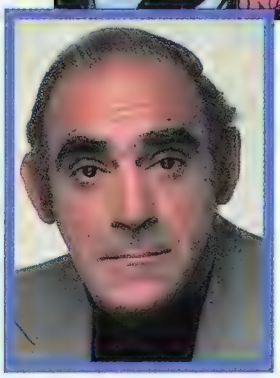
It takes a special woman to win the cold heart of a hitman. To give Tiegel that proper spunk and verve to date a killer, we recommend spunk and verve-mistress Robin Givens ("A Rage in Harlem").

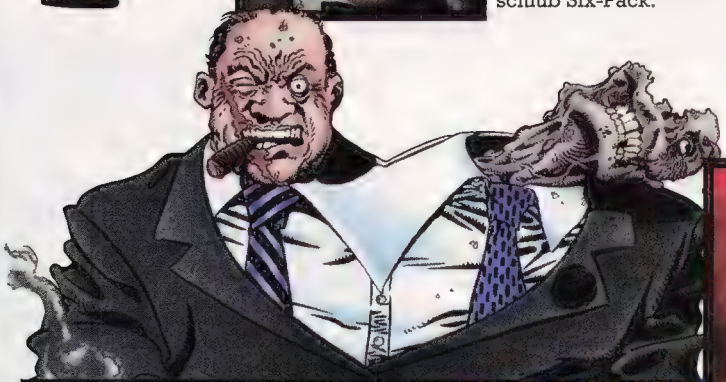
ABE VIGODA as MEN'S ROOM LOUIE

When it's time to hit the head and visit with gangster Men's Room Louie, there's nobody we'd wanna see more when we open the stall door than crusty Abe Vigoda ("Fish"). Vigoda does surly the way Michelangelo did marble—maybe better.

GEORGE WENDT as SIX-PACK

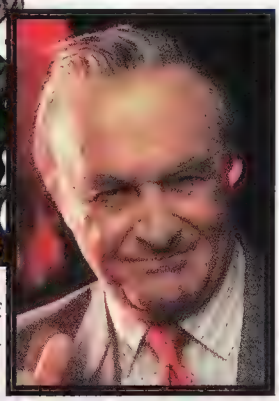
This Bud's for you, Mr. Pack. George Wendt (a.k.a. Norm from "Cheers") has years of experience playing an obese drunkard. We'd be remiss if we didn't let him play the good-hearted obese drunkard super-schlub Six-Pack.





ROBERT LOGGIA as MOE DUBELZ

Crime boss Moe Dubelz takes to heart the adage, "Two heads are better than one," even if the second one is a dessicated husk. Years of playing gruff, uncompromising hard-asses have made Robert Loggia ("Big") absolutely the most Dubelz-esque human around.



QUIET ON THE SET!

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED. CHAN: MICHAEL O'NEILL/OUTLINE; GIVENS: JON RAGEL/OUTLINE; GURGAN: TOM BUCHANAN/ TRANSPORTS INC.; JONES: LOGLA: FOTO FANTASIES.

A ▶ HEY, FEELING GOOD IS FOLDING A TO B. ◀ B

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WOW, IT'S AMAZING HOW FAR WE WILL GO TO FIND A PEACHY KEEN FLAVOR. FOR EXAMPLE, SENDING A STRAWBERRY QUESTIONING ITS FATE BY ROCKET LAUNCHER FROM FRUITLESS TOIL ON EARTH TO A DISTANT UTOPIA.

WE JUST WANT TO MAKE SURE YOU ARE HAVING FUN AND HOPEFULLY WE MAKE YOU FEEL GOOD.

A ▶ ◀ B

HAVING A 'BLAST'

Former X-Men artist creates Nickelodeon cartoon

Joe Madureira and **Jeph Loeb** are going to a place where only kids go: Nickelodeon.

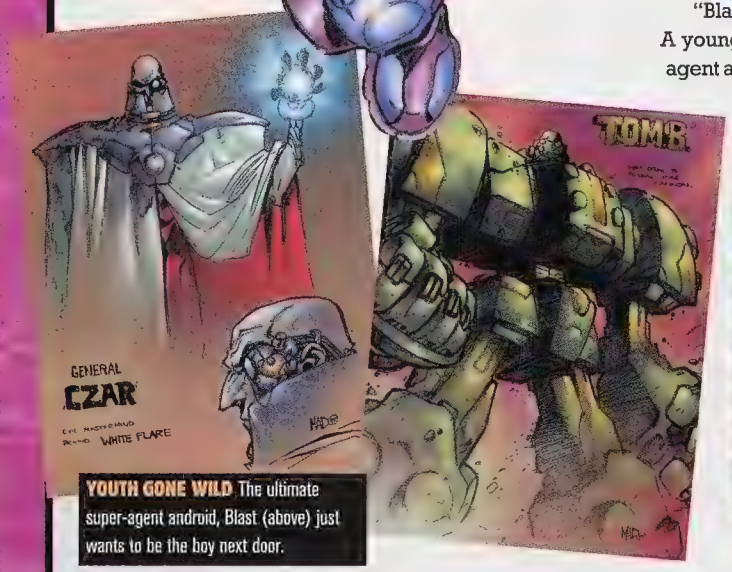
"Can you imagine an animated film like 'Aladdin' with Joe Madureira's artwork?" Loeb asked. Well, it's only a few years away.

That's right, Awesome Entertainment's former publisher Loeb and *Battle Chasers* creator/former *Uncanny X-Men* artist Madureira have co-created a new property titled "Blast." It's the story of the world's most powerful weapon that just happens to live next door. And they've sold it to Nickelodeon, which is currently looking at releasing a "Blast" animated feature film (yes, in theaters) in the summer of 2000.

"They're leaning towards the first full-length superhero animated feature that is not only based on Joe's [Madureira] designs, but done in Joe's style," Loeb said. "There is also a small possibility that 'Blast' will become a live-action film, and if Nickelodeon chooses that path, 'Blast' will also become an animated television property. The format won't be officially decided until the final version of the screenplay is approved."

Madureira, known for his American manga style, will both produce and co-write the screenplay with Loeb. In addition, Madureira will design all the characters and is currently negotiating whether he'll be involved with the storyboards. "Part of the deal was that they're going to stay true to my art style," Madureira said. "So it'll hopefully be fast-paced action, very fluid, with a manga feel, but still very much an American cartoon."

"Blast" is being called "Pinocchio meets the Terminator." A young scientist named Professor Grant creates a super-agent android for the CIA based on the image of his recently deceased son. But since Blast is a learning computer who needs worldly experience, the government puts him, Grant (his father) and field agent Alex Gherard (posing as his mother) in the suburbs. "You



YOUTH GONE WILD The ultimate super-agent android, Blast (above) just wants to be the boy next door.

CLOSE UP JEPH LOEB

FACTS & FACES

JEPH LOEB, 40, has done it all from comics to movies to TV. He's written such high-profile Marvel books as *Cable*, *X-Force* and *X-Man*, and teamed up with artist Tim Sale on DC's *Batman: The Long Halloween* and the upcoming *Superman for all Seasons*. He's written/produced such films as "Teen Wolf" and "Commando" and, with former *Uncanny X-Men* artist Joe Madureira, created "Blast," a potential animated movie for Nickelodeon.

LOEB PHOTO: PAUL SCHRADI

HOLLYWOOD AND TV STUFF THAT YOU CARE ABOUT

ons

MADUREIRA

have an agent who doesn't want to be a babysitter," Madureira said, "a scientist who just wants his son back and a robot who is learning emotions."

"Like Pinocchio, Blast is longing to be a real boy who asks the important questions like, 'If I like this girl, what does this mean, because I'm a machine?" Loeb added. "He's fully aware he's a machine and wants desperately to be human."

Despite this strong desire to be human, Blast thinks it's the coolest thing to be the most powerful weapon on Earth. Imagine if you had super-strength, the ability to alter your arms into rocket launchers or could stretch like Mr. Fantastic. "He loves to get pulled out of school to go fight the bad guys," Loeb said. "He's like T-1000 [from "Terminator 2: Judgment Day"] and can shift his form to have rockets come out of his chest."

Madureira was reluctant at first about creating the movie property. In fact, he thought Loeb was nuts. "Who would have thought Nickelodeon would want to produce an animated show with *my* art?" he said. "Now, I can't wait to see what it looks like." ■ **MATTHEW SENREICH**

WIPE OUT

'Silver Surfer' to soar no more?

Marvel's financial woes continue to wreak havoc on its film and television endeavors for Fox.

"All production on Marvel Entertainment shows has been put on hold pending resolution of their bankruptcy," Barry Stagg, vice-president, corporate communications, of Fox Family Worldwide said. At press time, Marvel's financial situation remained unresolved.

This means that no production work is being done on Saban Entertainment's animated "**Silver Surfer**" series, which was a ratings success in its first season and was renewed for a second, or on the animated "**Captain America**," which was being retooled for creative reasons.

Stagg declined to speculate if "Silver Surfer" would be back on Fox next fall. Yet even if there were an immediate resolution of Marvel's financial situation, it's doubtful new "Silver Surfer" episodes could be ready by the fall. One new episode, "The Forever War" featuring **Adam Warlock**, was held over from the May sweeps and is scheduled to air this summer.

In terms of live-action movies, "X-Men," "Fantastic Four" and "Silver Surfer" remain in development at Fox, and "Hulk" is being reworked at Universal Pictures to bring down the budget.

"No new business" is how a studio source summed up Marvel's current dealings. ■ **ROB ALLSTETTER**

MADUREIRA PHOTO: JOHN W. McDONOUGH

A SUPER-BATMAN

World's Finest: Take Two

How do ya top teaming up Superman with Batman? Simple. Have Superman *become* Batman. That's exactly what happens during an episode of next season's animated "Superman."

"Batman is missing, and crime in Gotham City has gone rampant," explained "Superman" and "Batman" producer **Alan Burnett**. "So Superman comes to find out what he can do, and ends up putting on the Batman costume to locate Bruce Wayne."

Before you start groaning, keep in mind that even the producers themselves admitted the concept's a bit far-fetched.

"It's a story I hated when I first heard about it," producer **Bruce Timm** said. "I said, 'That's the corniest, old-fashioned, goofiest Superman story I've ever heard.' But when we started talking about it, I realized it could be fun."

And the fun really takes off when Supes and Robin team up to fight practically every villain who's ever appeared on "Batman" or "Superman," from Brainiac to Bane to the Riddler. But the episode's only one of two for next season bringing Superman and Batman together—the other features Ra's Al Ghul as the villain. The Man of Steel will also be teaming up with **Green Lantern** in an episode to battle Sinestro. As for which Green Lantern, Timm said, "He's got Hal Jordan's origin and kind of Hal Jordan's costume, but he's Kyle Rayner."

GOING BATTY Supes heads to Gotham City to find Batman.

The third season of "Superman" also introduces a major new villainess, Volcana, voiced by Peri Gilpin ("Frasier").

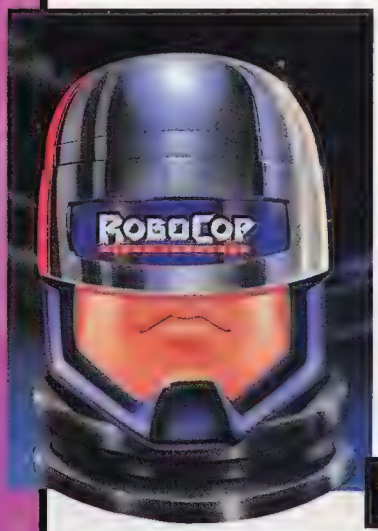
"She's a firestarter character. She can generate fire and throw fireballs," producer Paul Dini said. "She's got kind of a tortured background. She was turned into a weapon by the government, and the government wants her back, basically to kill her."

Other highlights of the new season are the return of Phantom Zone baddies Jax-Ur and Mala, a guest appearance by three members of the **Legion of Super-Heroes**, another Toyman story and a showdown with Darkseid. ■ **ROB ALLSTETTER**

STEEL JUSTICE

RoboCop enforces the law on small screens everywhere next season

Larry Houston is at it again. Houston, the producer behind the "**X-Men**" and "**Fantastic Four**" animated series, is producing "**RoboCop Alpha Commando,**" an all-new animated series. Forty episodes are being created by MGM Animation for daily syndication beginning this fall.



SHELL-HEAD RoboCop respects the law. But he *loves* donuts.

Oddly enough, this is Houston's second go-round with the character. He was a storyboard artist for Marvel's syndicated "RoboCop" series in the late 1980s.

"It's been fun working on him again and seeing what I could to do update the character," he said. "I got the chance to redesign him. He's much more superheroic in proportion, broad-shouldered and with a tapered waist, more like a **Joe Madureira** character. We've also simplified him in terms of line drawing, so we can get the maximum out of the animation."

The show opens with a three-part episode, setting up all the new dynamics.

"The politicians had gotten RoboCop shut down for about three to five years," Houston said. "But a new organization, Alpha (which is similar to Marvel's S.H.I.E.L.D.), is successful in getting him reactivated."

RoboCop will once again work for the Detroit Police Dept., but he's also working for Alpha, which will take him out of the city and into such diverse locales as Alaska and the swamps of Louisiana. Causing problems for our "Man of Steel" is the main villain Rexor. He's a member of DARC, a rival organization to Alpha, striving to create chaos throughout the world.

No need to worry, though. Robo's got plenty of friends to help him out. There's Neumeier, a 20-year-old computer whiz, who reactivates Robo and provides him with new gadgets, and Sgt. Reed, a Detroit precinct cop.

And of course, every beast has his beauty. In this case, Robo will be aided by Agent Miner, an Asian-American female. "She can hold her own in a firefight," Houston said. "But we've also added a human angle; she's a single mom."

■ **ROB ALLSTETTER**

FASTFORWARD

THIS MONTH: COMIC CREATORS' SCREENPLAYS

NAME/COMICS WORK	HOLLYWOOD PROJECT	STATUS	THE SCOOP
Brian Michael Bendis *Jinx, AKA Goldfish*	"AKA Goldfish" screenplay	in development at Miramax/Dimension	*"Right now, they've approved my screenplay, and we're using that to entice directors," Bendis said. "We have to wait for a director to come on, but we might start filming sometime by the end of this year."*
Garth Ennis *Preacher, Hitman*	"Preacher" screenplay	Optioned by Rachael Talalay ("Tank Girl")–no word on a studio or preproduction.	*"It's basically the first six issues of the comic that establish who everyone is and where everyone is going," Ennis said . "Arseface, The Saint of Killers, and Jesse's ghostly guardian all show up."*
Neil Gaiman *Sandman*	"Princess Mononoke" (English language script for anime, Miramax) "Death" (treatment, Warner Brothers) and "Sandman" (screenplay, Warner Brothers) "Neverwhere" (screenplay, Henson/Sony)	all in some form of development, "Mononoke" scheduled for 1999 release	*"Princess Mononoke" was Japan's highest-grossing anime film in 1997, and tells the story of a young girl raised in ancient Japan as a wolf goddess. Due to pre-production troubles with "Sandman" and "Death," look for "Neverwhere" to be Gaiman's next film project to see the light of day.*
Everette Hartsoe *Razor, Poizon*	"Razor," "Poizon" screenplays	shopping around	*"To be honest, if I sell one of these scripts, I'm closing shop," Hartsoe said. " My love for these characters is definitely in the movies, and that's where I'd like to see them."*
Grant Morrison *JLA, Invisibles*	"Lawnmower Man 3" & "4" (outlines); "The Invisibles" (treatment); untitled movie about two girls clubbing from London to Berlin (treatment)	all in early development	*"I was asked to do the 'Lawnmower Man' stuff because the producers liked my writing on* Doom Patrol*," Morrison said. "The untitled project is about two girls who travel across Europe. It has time travel and other weirdness thrown in–it's my kind of project."*
James Robinson *Starman, Leave it to Chance*	"Jason vs. Freddy" (drafts); "Evermere" (Mario Kassar and Andy Vajna); untitled bounty hunter project (Paramount/Alphaville)	"Jason vs. Freddy" currently in development, while "Evermere" and bounty hunter project being written.	*"'Evermere' is a project with writer David Goyer, who did the original 'Crow' movie," Robinson said. "It's the first part of a trilogy about a young boy who learns he's heir to the throne in an alternate dimension."*
Steven T. Seagle *Uncanny X-Men, Alpha Flight, House of Secrets, Sandman Mystery Theatre*	"House of Secrets" (Warner Brothers)	in revision/pre-production	*"Warner Brothers is still claiming that 'House' is on the fast track production-wise, and will begin full production by August," Seagle said. "Here's hoping."* ■ **MATTHEW BRADY**

TRAILERS...

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION?

SOUTH PARK ROLLS ON: Comedy Central has renewed "South Park," hiking its total episode order to 73 and taking the show into the year 2001. "South Park" recently garnered the highest rating for any entertainment series in basic cable history with the "Cartman's Mom's Still a Dirty Slut" episode. Plus, Paramount Pictures has given the thumbs-up to make an R-rated "South Park" movie. Sweet!

GEN13 PREMIERE: The still-unscheduled "Gen13" animated movie, targeted for a straight-to-video release by Disney's Hollywood Pictures, will be screened for the public during the Wizard World convention July 17-19 in Chicago. The film, three years in the making, was written, directed and produced by Kevin Altieri, best known for directing "Batman: The Animated Series." Voice talent includes Alicia Witt, Flea, E.G. Daly, John de Lancie, Mark Hamill and Lauren Lane.

MORE NICK AT NIGHT? Ratings–and Marvel's financial situation–will determine if there's a follow-up to Fox's "Nick Fury" movie, which aired May 26. "We're really looking to do more of these," actor David Hasselhoff, who has signed on for five Fury flicks, said. "We're going to take Nick Fury to Hong Kong, Nick Fury to Monte Carlo and Nick Fury to the jungle and really stay true to the characters."

DILBERT YEARS: Daniel Stern (narrator from "The Wonder Years") will be doing the voice of Dilbert on UPN's upcoming prime-time animated series "Dilbert," based on Scott Adams' comic strip. Other cast members include Chris Elliott as Dogbert, Kathy Griffin ("Suddenly Susan") as Alice, Gordon Hunt as Wally, Larry Miller as Boss and Jackie Hoffman as Dilmom.

BAT RUMORS: Kurt Russell as Batman? Kim Basinger returning as Vicki Vale? Jenny McCarthy as Harley Quinn? Rumors abound regarding the next "Batman" movie, but, at press time, Warner Bros. had announced no official plans.

RUSSELL UP Kurt Russell as Batman? Maybe.

SHORT TAKES: TNT's "Witchblade" live-action series is expected to announced a show runner (someone who develops a series) and casting soon....A two-hour "Witchblade" movie will kick off the series early next year....According to *Entertainment Weekly*, Ralph Fiennes might star in "From Hell," a movie from New Line Cinema based on Alan Moore's comic series featuring Jack the Ripper....Pressman Film is showing interest in animation, perhaps featuring James O'Barr's The Crow...."Godzilla" producers Roland Emmerich and Dean Devlin, have set their sights on their next project, "The Mark," based on a character and screenplay by Awesome Entertainment's Rob Liefeld....Terry Moore is no longer pursuing an animated "Strangers in Paradise" series on HBO. A live-action film might be next on his agenda. ■ **ROB ALLSTETTER**

KEVIN SMITH WATCH

FACTS & FACES

Latest Sighting: April's Pittsburgh Comicon. Smith put in a surprise appearance and signed well over 1,000 autographs. "I had a great time," he said. "But I was so busy, I had to send friends out on the floor to buy stuff for me." Smith picked up *Danger Girl* Tour Books for his comic store (Jay & Silent Bob's Secret Stash in Red Bank, N.J.) and was *hoping* to get a 12-inch Batman Animated Nightwing action figure. "But the damn things aren't out yet," Smith said. "Nobody even had an early one stolen off the loading dock."

"Dogma" Update: It's a wrap! Filming is done on Smith's supernatural road-trip comedy and only the wrap party remains. "I'm really not Joe Party," he said. "It's not like I just can't wait to booze it up. But it will be nice to have closure. I'll be pretty mellow at the party."

"Dogma" Comic Reference You'll See: "Batman," Smith leaked. "There's a line in there about how Batman never uses guns. If I tell you any more than that, Miramax will kill me." ■ **JIM McLAUCHLIN**

KURT RUSSELL PHOTO COURTESY OF FOTO FANTASIES

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BASIC TRAINING

KEVIN MAGUIRE SHOWS YOU

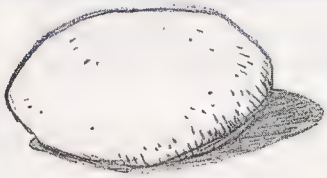
THIS MONTH'S SPECIAL INSTRUCTOR

HOW TO DRAW FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

Ever since I got started in this biz, people have always commented on my use of faces, asking me who my influences were. That's easy: Chuck Jones.

If you're not hip to old Warner Bros. cartoons, he's one of the all-time great animation directors and creator of Wile E. Coyote and the Road Runner. Check out any scene where Wile E.'s set a trap for his fleet-footed adversary and notice the smug look on his face. No need for dialogue. Then watch the trap go horribly wrong. For me, the hysterical part wasn't when the boulder crushed him, it was the pathetic look on his face just seconds before, when he realized he was screwed.

Knowing just what type of expression to give your character is an important skill. So grab your pencil and let's get emotional!



SAGA OF THE ROCK

Creating Life

I once had an idea for a comic following the life of a rock. Yeah, I can hear you: "The story of a rock? Who cares?!" Sure, intellectually, we might learn something about geology, but emotionally, you're right. Who cares? There's nothing to relate to, and that's my point.

As artists we have little influence over a character's dialogue and actions. That's the writer's job. So as far as creating characters readers can relate to, we can help through body language and facial expressions, which is just what I'm here to show you today.

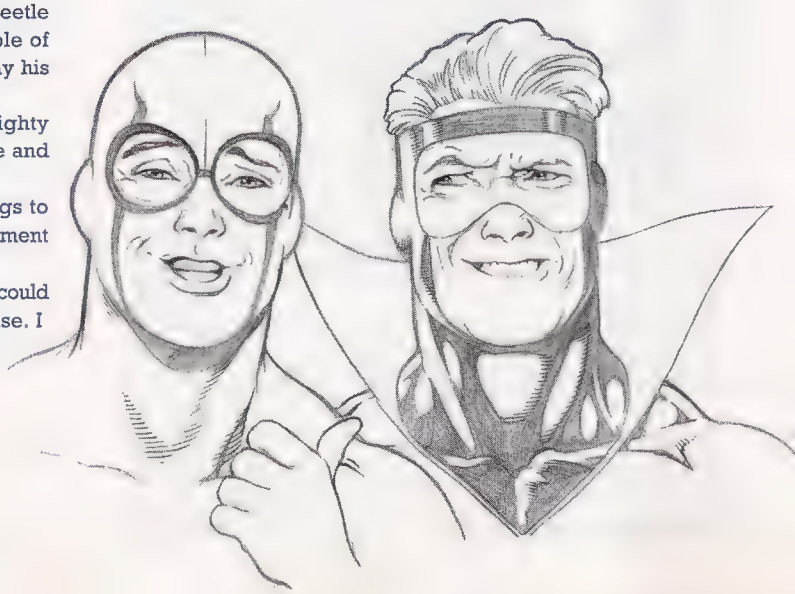
Kodak Moment

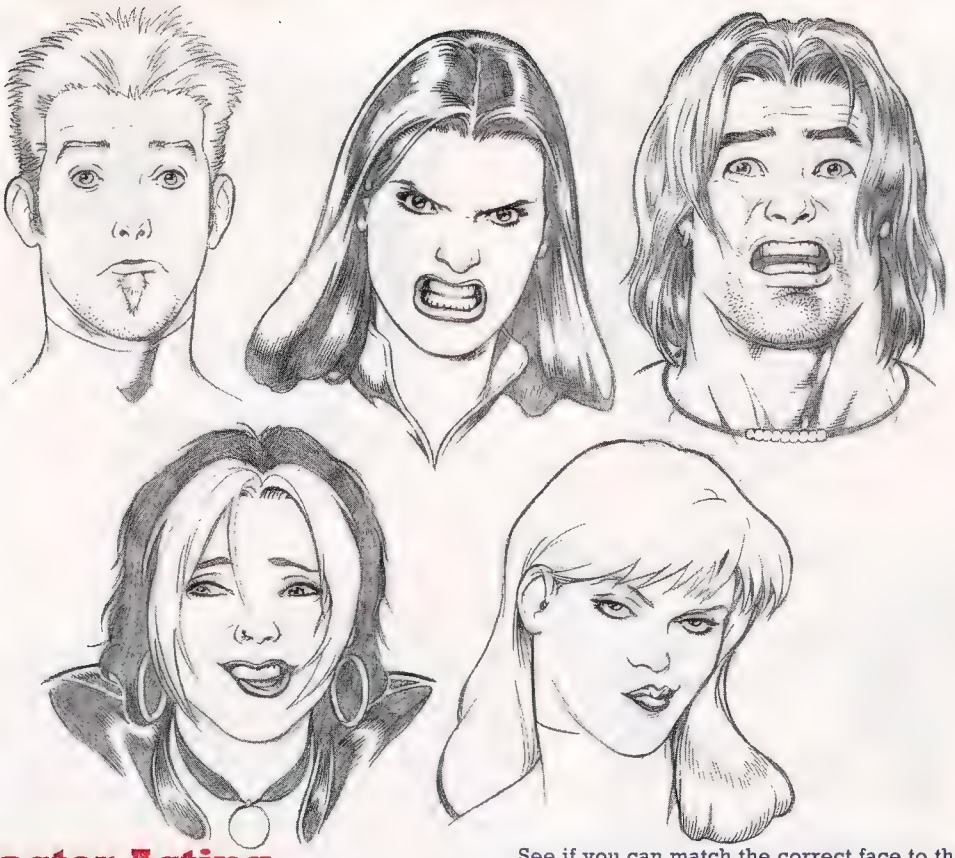
Okay, you're given a script where Blue Beetle and Booster Gold are chatting with a couple of women. Beetle's doing the talking. Let's say his dialogue's something like this:

"Hello there, ladies. You're looking mighty fine. I'm Blue Beetle of Justice League fame and this is my trusty little sidekick, Boosty!"

The interesting expression here belongs to Booster. It's a snapshot in time. The exact moment he hears his intro. Not before. Not after.

Now, there are a lot of valid directions you could go with his look, like intense fury or surprise. I chose this moment, because it's the most interesting. It's during an emotional transition between being happy and insulted. It's a reaction that's unique to this moment, as opposed to showing him purely insulted which could apply almost anywhere. (Especially with friends like Blue Beetle).





Character Acting

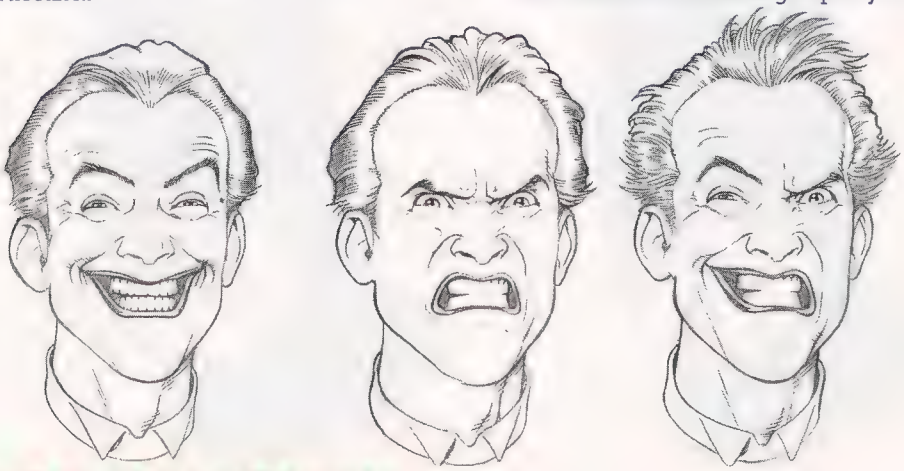
A good way to work is to think of yourselves as directors, and your characters as actors. It's your job to make them perform. Personally, I never think of comic characters as costumes and powers. To me, they're people. They each react to things differently and you don't need dialogue to get that across.

Let's use the Gen[13] gang as an example. Here's the story: Lynch heads into the den and fires up the Nintendo, but it won't work. It's broken! So he goes around asking the kids who broke it. Each one answers with the same four words: "I didn't break it!"

See if you can match the correct face to the thought behind that same line:

A) I didn't do it, but I'm sure I'm gonna get blamed for it.
B) I can't believe you're asking *me* that question.
C) Oh, darn! I didn't know it was broken. That sucks!
D) How many times do I have to tell you, no I didn't!
E) Okay, I did it. But I'm not going to admit it.

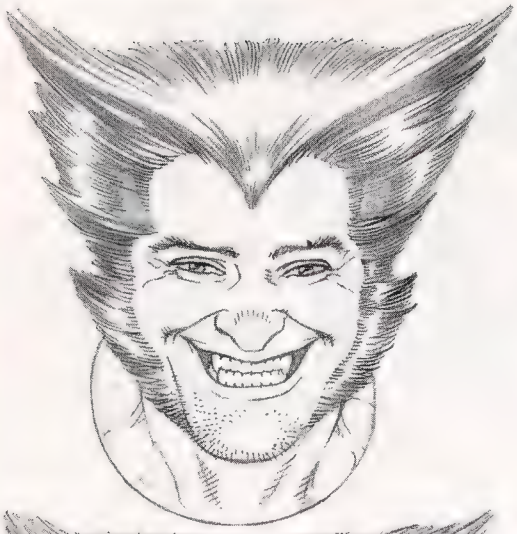
I'm not gonna tell you who was thinking what. If you can't figure it out, then I haven't done my job properly. Break off into individual discussion groups if you're having trouble.

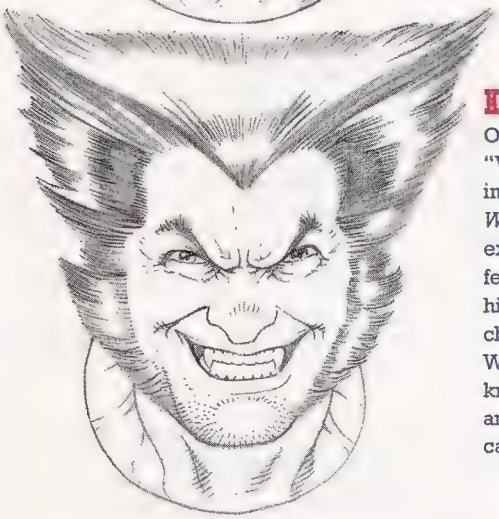


The Two-Face Theory

I'm well aware of the irony in using the Joker to illustrate the "two-face theory," but I've used it with him more than anyone else. It's a bit more exaggerated than the Booster Gold shot, and it's something I like using with deranged characters to give them a quirky sort of expression.

It's real easy. Take a shot of the happy Joker and paste it together with a shot of him furious. Check out the results by placing your hand over one side of the third illustration, then do it to the other side. Get it? It's kinda fun. Now try it with other expressions to see what kind of combinations you can come up with.





In Your Eyes

Okay, you're penciling *X-Men* and the script says two words: "Wolverine smiles." But there's more to a smile than just flashing enamel. Ask yourself what else is involved. How does he feel? *Why* is he smiling? Each of these three faces is exactly the same except for the eyes (and the eyebrows and forehead). Doing different things with the eyes dramatically changes the meaning of his smile. In the first illustration, Wolverine seems sincere, almost charming. In the second, he looks giddy, even goofy. Not at all the Wolverine we're used to. But the third one, that's the Wolvie we know and love. That's a smile that says "I'm gonna kill someone and enjoy it!" It's the eyes that make all the difference. They're not called the "windows to the soul" for nothing.

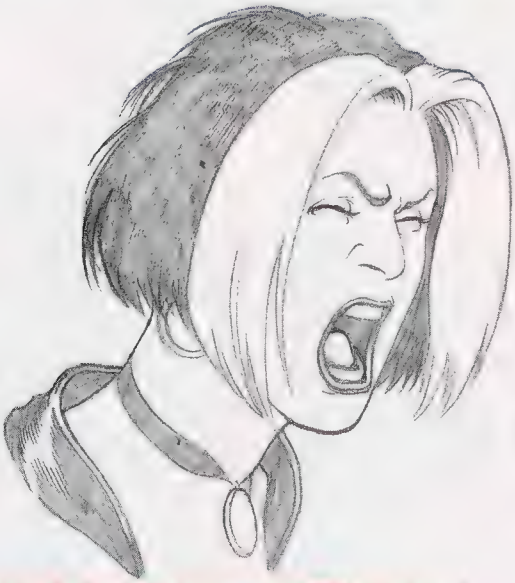
Blind as a Bat

I hate drawing characters who have no pupils. (And, no, I don't mean students!) You lose a valuable tool without them. Martial artists suggest looking in your opponents' eyes to see when they'll attack. (Or maybe I heard that in some Jackie Chan movie.) Anyway, check out these shots of Batman. You get a better sense of what he's thinking when you actually see his eyes. Granted, not showing his eyes works to the Caped Crusader's advantage. But you see what you're losing as a storyteller.

Line Strength

I was taught that when drawing comics you need bold, strong lines. And in a lot of cases, that works just fine. But it doesn't have to be a universal rule. There are certain moments where the characters aren't strong. They're human. They feel a wide range of emotions.

Take Reed Richards. He's just been given some devastating news. The first illustration shows a typical comicbook reaction. Yes, it indicates shock, but you've gotta agree that the second reaction goes much deeper. He's completely staggered and emotionally vulnerable. On an action-movie star scale, the first shot's on a Jean-Claude Van Damme level, whereas the second one's more on a Harrison Ford level. You know what I mean? So don't be afraid to use different types of lines to add depth and serious emotion to your character's face.



Wrinkle Cream, Please!

When drawing young people, especially women, you have to watch out. Make sure not to go overboard on the wrinkles. Look at the two examples above. Sure, Freefall looks really upset in the second shot, but all those wrinkles also make her look about 10 years older than she should be. So be careful; it's a delicate balance.

Y'know, I could go on for pages upon pages showing you how to draw an angry face or a lustful face or a sad face, but that's not the point I want to illustrate. Facial expressions are one of the storytelling tools you have to work with. They're not about penciling a goofy face or an interesting one, they're about penciling an *appropriate* face. Get inside your characters. Know how they feel from panel to panel. Use a mirror if it helps, just like I did in my self-portrait. (See, I'm not vain; I'm just practicing!) And if a picture's really worth a thousand words, then the right facial expression's worth a thousand thought balloons. Have fun, and I'll see ya in the funny books!

To check out Kevin Maguire's awesome facial expressions (well, his characters', not his), check out DC Comics' late-1980s Justice League *series. Otherwise, look for a Maguire* Gen[13] *project due out later this year.*

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WITCHBLADE™ NO. 500

The new *Wizard* Future Edition takes your favorite comic character (Sara Pezzini, natch!) and transports her into the distant future. *Witchblade* #500 is a vital piece in the future continuity of *Witchblade*. And you can catch an early glimpse!

Witchblade #500, the very first Future Edition, takes place in Manhattan, 20 years in the future, where there are no cars, Sara is still the bearer of the Witchblade and also has a son! And, since the first bearer of the Witchblade, no one has ever held it as long as Sara. This has led to her total mastery of its powers, one of which has stunted her aging process—but not that of Jake McCarthy and Ian Nottingham, both of whom play a pivotal role in Sara's life, and that of her son! Pick up *Witchblade* #500 to see how the characters will develop and find out who is the father of Sara's son.

Every true *Witchblade* fan will need to get a hold of this incredible issue. There is no way anyone can risk missing out on the chance to get a peek into the future of this cool comic series. *Witchblade* #500 is done by *Wizard* and Top Cow...and only available through this special *Wizard* offer. Fill out the order form and toss in the $3 immediately. Time is wasting!

Within the Witchblade #500, you'll find these hidden treasures:

- A brand-new story written by David Wohl and Christina Z. and drawn by Randy Green!
- The first-ever *Wizard* Future Edition!
- A sneak peek 20 years into the future of Sara Pezzini!
- The introduction of Sara's son and the revelation of who his father is!
- Behind-the-scenes sketchbook material! See what it actually took to make this comic come to life!
- And the most unbelievable part of all—this is a Witchblade story you won't find anywhere else! This exclusive comic is only available through this one-time *Wizard* offer!

Don't delay! Time keeps on slipping into the future!

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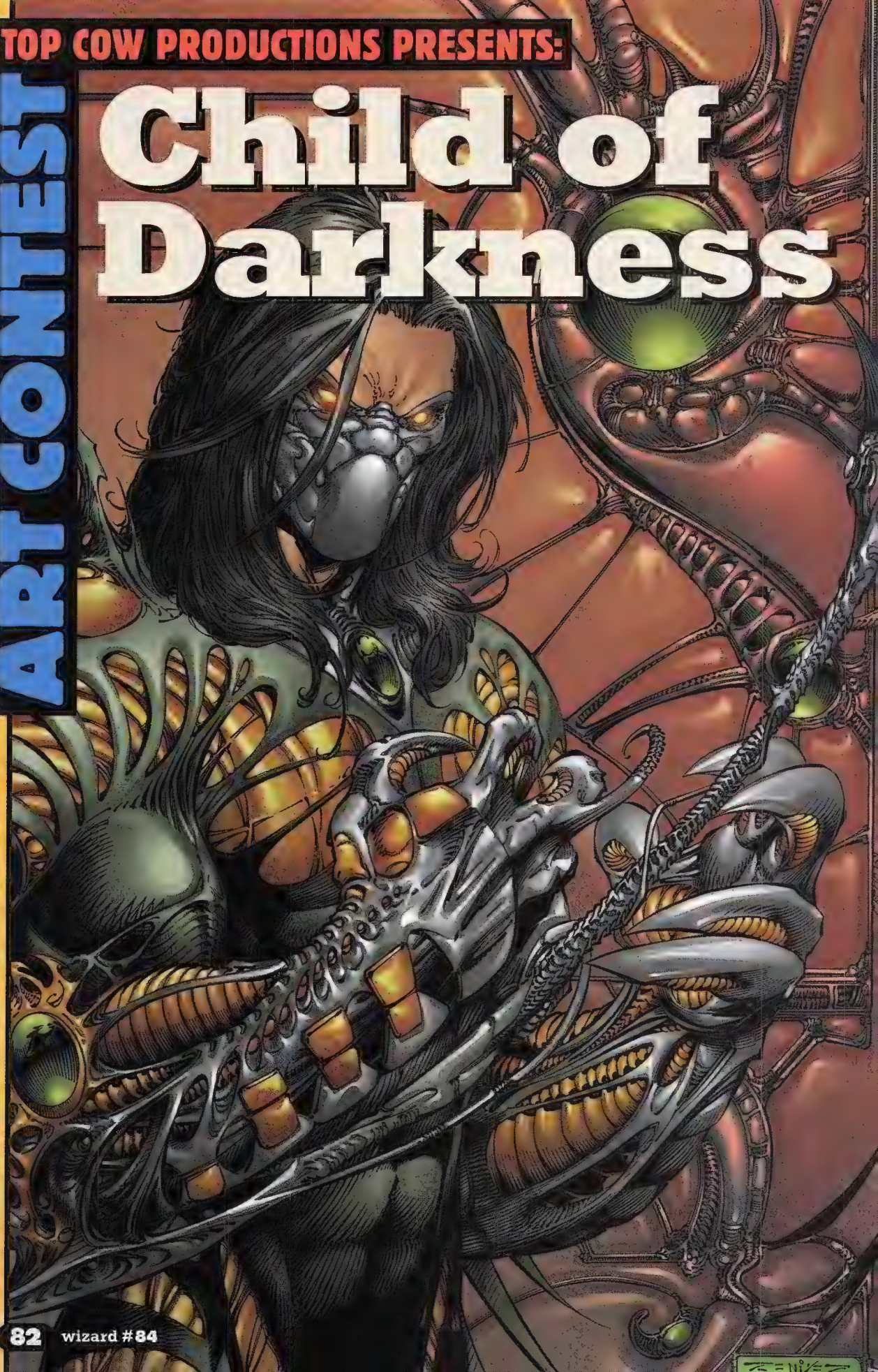
TOP COW PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS:

ART CONTEST

Child of Darkness



Poor Jackie Estacado, wielder of the Darkness. We're sure that Jackie wants to have kids. But unlike normal guys, if Jackie sires a rugrat, he's toast. But what if this wasn't so? What if he could make a baby? What would it look like? Well, guess what? That's what we want you to show us! If Jackie started a family with any female character in comics, what would this child look like? If he had a child with She-Hulk, would it be green? What about his child with Little Lulu?

PRIZES

GRAND PRIZE (1): One master creator wins a sketch of The Darkness drawn by Joe Benitez, a cool Darkness T-shirt, a Darkness poster, *The Darkness* #1-#17 signed by Marc Silvestri and orignal trading card art by Silvestri. Plus, he'll have his sketch printed in the letters column of an upcoming issue of *The Darkness*! Now that's the goods!

FIRST PRIZE (2): Two weird scientists each win a complete set of *Darkness Collected Editions* signed by Marc Silvestri, a Darkness T-shirt and a Darkness poster.

SECOND PRIZE (5): Five mad doctors each win a Darkness poster, cool Darkness stickers and a copy of *The Darkness* #17 signed by Joe Benitez.

When you're done drawing, fill out the entry form below, attach it to your artwork and send it in. The most creative artists earn the prizes. Just keep in mind: Submissions can be on any form of unlined paper or posterboard and can be in any medium (oils, crayon, marker, etc.). Neon inks will not print. Artwork must not be larger than 8" X 11 1/4". Do not fold, bend or roll artwork. Mail flat.

All contestants must send in two photographs of themselves. Put your name, address, date of birth and phone number on the back of each photo. (No Polaroids, please.)

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THE LEGAL RIGHTS OF A CHILD

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Entertainment, Top Cow Productions, their immediate families and every deadbeat dad. Pay up already! Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, ZIP, e-mail address and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card, and attach the form or card to your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: 'Child of Darkness' Art Contest, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become the property of Wizard Entertainment and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by Aug. 28, 1998.** Wizard Entertainment is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Winners will be selected based on originality and creativity by Wizard Entertainment. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. If you were punished and couldn't get out to mail your entry...tough! Winners will be notified no later than Oct. 2, 1998. If an entrant, having been declared as a winner, does not accept the prize or the prize or prize notification is undeliverable, another entry will be selected. In the event that a prize is not available or it becomes impossible for the sponsor to award the prize which has been designated, the sponsor retains the right to substitute a prize or product of equal value to the winner. Determination of whether a prize or product is of equal value is at the sole discretion of the sponsor. Winning entries will be selected on or about Sept. 11, 1998.

For a list of winners, available after Sept. 11, 1998, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: 'Child of Darkness' Winners List, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

"Child of Darkness" Art Contest Entry Form

CONTEST DEADLINE: AUGUST 28, 1998!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

E-Mail Address _____

DID YOU ATTACH YOUR ENTRY AND PHOTOS?

Drawing BOARD

Who needs the pros? This is the show for WIZARD READERS' ART

It's the winners of *Wizard* #78's Spider-Man art contest! An original Mike Wieringo Spider-Man sketch swings into the hands of the talented Grand Prize winner, who best recreated the splash page of *Sensational Spider-Man* #25. In addition to the original Spidey sketch, our main winner snags a Spider-Man cold-cast porcelain bust from Legends in 3 Dimensions. And oh, each artist of all the entries seen here webs up a copy of *Sensational Spider-Man* #25 signed by Joe Bennett and Todd Dezago, plus bragging rights for just being published in this here magazine. Congratulations to all the winners! You're the cream for our peaches!

GRAND PRIZE WINNER

THIS ONE CAUGHT OUR EYE

CIVILIAN WAR
by TIMOTHY STILES
Champaign, Ill.

THE BOOTY

DARK FORCES
INAKI MIRANDA, Madrid, Spain

WILD WEBBIN'
NICHOLAS BRADSHAW, New Brunswick, Canada

UNFRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD SPIDER-CLAN
SAM CHAUVIN, Jacksonville, Fla.

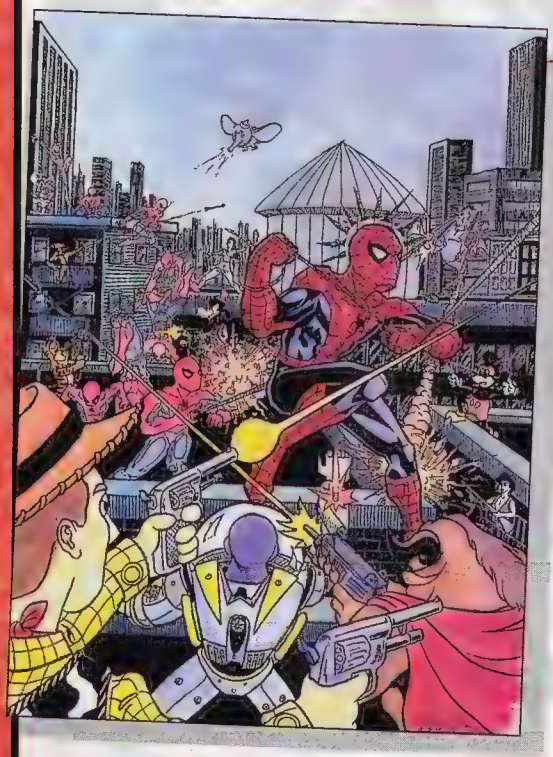
SPIDER-MASSACRE
AARON JENKINSON, Ontario, Canada

HONORABLEMENTIONS

Drawing BOARD

THIS IS FOR THE CLONE SAGA!
RICHARD CAMERON, Manchester, England

SPIDER-SENSE... REVOLTING
JAVIER & PETE CASTILLO, Oxnard, Calif.



SPIDEY VS. DISNEY
DAVID YEE, San Jose, Calif.

Want your art to appear on one of these three pages in future issues? Think you've got what it takes? (Hey—quality *and* originality count, y'know.) Then send your "Drawing Board" entries to:

SUBMIT!

Drawing Board
c/o Wizard Entertainment
151 Wells Avenue
Congers, NY 10920-2064

And follow these rules or else: Use any form of unlined paper or posterboard (no larger than 8 inches by 11 1/4 inches) and any medium (oils, crayon, mustard, etc.—but not neon inks). Put your name, full address and TELEPHONE NUMBER on the back of your piece, and mail it flat to avoid damage. **You must also include two color photos of yourself** (no Polaroids, please). All entries are nonreturnable and become the property of Wizard Entertainment. Employees of Wizard Entertainment are the sole judges of the contests, and all decisions are final. Got it? All right, good luck!

Put the POWER of the Auction Universe Network to work for you

With 1,000 categories of collectibles, antiques and specialty items, you can buy or sell anything online at Auction Universe. From antiques to baseball cards, toys to jewelry and movie memorabilia, Auction Universe moves merchandise for you!

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The Auction Universe Network is the center of the Internet's largest community of online auction sites. We're connected to and supported by major newspapers around the country — papers like the Los Angeles Times, Minneapolis Star Tribune and St. Louis Post-Dispatch. We also have a variety of specialty magazine and collectible publication partners. This adds up to an unbeatable national network of online auction sites. All powered by Auction Universe.

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Classic
Car Stereo

Parts
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Collectibles & Memorabilia

Amusement & Theme Animation Art
Autographs
Aviation
Banks
Bears
Beatles
Clocks
Coins
Comic Books
Disneyana
Dolls
Figures
Elvis
Fishing
Lunchboxes
Music Boxes
Pez
Phonographic
Pottery
Porcelain
Radios
Railroad
Stamps
Star Trek
Star Wars
Television
Sports
Trading Cards
Toys

Computers

Books/Manuals
Custom Computer Programming
Hardware
Floppy, Other
Internet, Web Services
Software
Publishing

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Appliances
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Furniture
Home Entertainment
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Tools

Personal

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Costume Jewelry
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Be sure to visit us at Wizard World Chicago.

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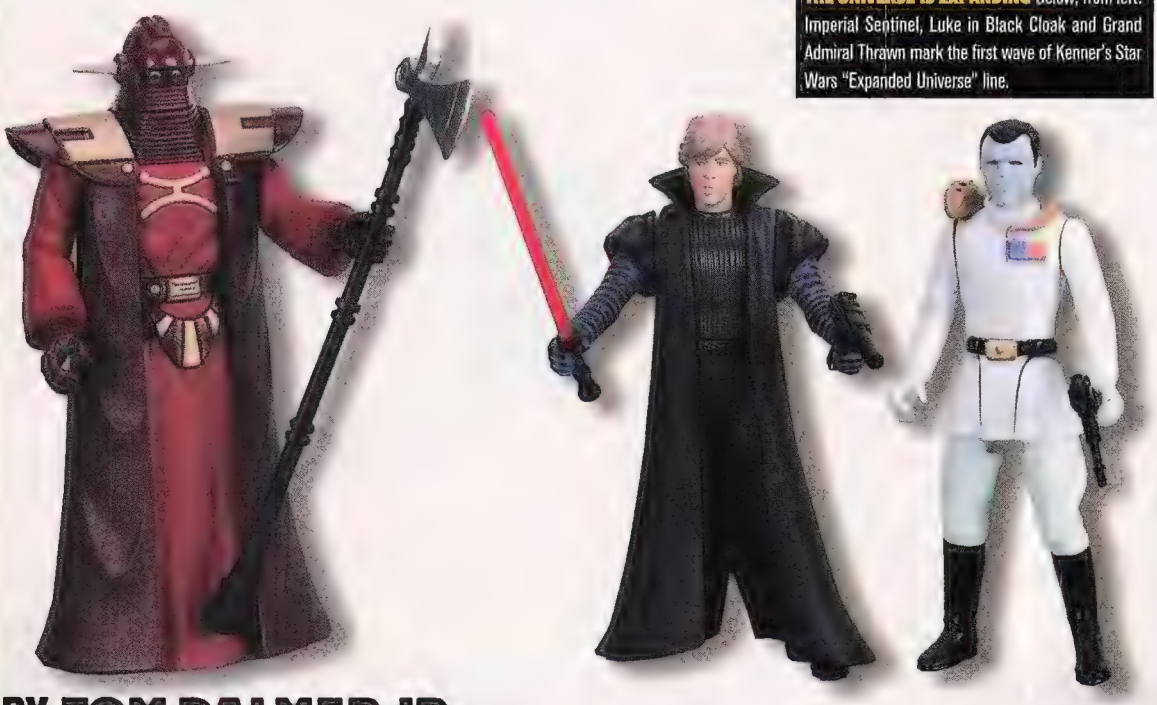
Be sure to visit Collectors Auction for rare coins, rare stamps, vintage record albums, rare autographs and vintage sports collectibles at www.collectorsauction.com

THE EXPANDING STAR WARS UNIVERSE

After making more than 100 figures in its "Power of the Force" line, think Kenner's run out of Star Wars action figures to make? Guess again, bucko! This spring, Kenner will unveil the latest "Expanded Universe" action figures, toys based on the many Star Wars novels, comic books and video games which take place outside of the popular movie trilogy. First up in for the action figure treatment is **Grand Admiral Thrawn**, that blue-skinned meanie from the novel "Heir to the Empire," and the **Imperial Sentinel** and **Luke in Black Cloak** from Dark Horse's *Dark Empire*. The rest of the "Expanded Universe" figures will include **Leia in Black Cloak** and the **Clone Emperor** from *Dark Empire*, **Kyle Katarn** and the **Darktrooper** from the *Dark Forces* video game and **Mara Jade** from "Heir to the Empire."

In other Star Wars news, the Lego Group has acquired the rights to take George Lucas' characters and turn them into Lego, the popular building block toy. Ever dream of making your own TIE Fighter/X-Wing combination? Well, now's your chance. Lego has the rights to make all the characters and vehicles from the original "Star Wars" trilogy, as well as the upcoming prequel movies. Look for the Star Wars Classic Lego line in early 1999, followed by prequel Lego sets shortly after.

THE UNIVERSE IS EXPANDING Below, from left: Imperial Sentinel, Luke in Black Cloak and Grand Admiral Thrawn mark the first wave of Kenner's Star Wars "Expanded Universe" line.



STAR WARS PHOTOS COURTESY OF KENNER.

BY TOM PALMER JR.

ALPHA FLIGHT VS. THE AVENGERS

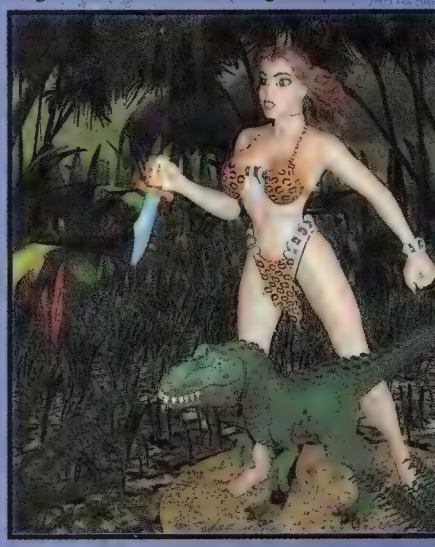
Toy Biz keeps plugging along, bringing fans action figures from every corner of the Marvel Universe. Next up for the plastic treatment is Canada's own superteam Alpha Flight in its classic '80s lineup. A prototype has already been completed for the team's big woolly guy **Sasquatch**, and preliminary work has begun on **Snowbird**, **Puck**, **Northstar** and **Aurora**. Look for this line of action figures in 1999.

And, hot on the heels of the successful gift set of the original X-Men roster, and the upcoming set from *Giant Size X-Men* #1, Toy Biz is preparing a boxed set of Earth's Mightiest Heroes, the original Avengers. Taking inspiration from the team's first appearance way back in 1963, Toy Biz will make action figures of **Thor**, **Hulk**, **Wasp**, **Iron Man**, **Ant-Man** and **Giant-Man**, based on Jack Kirby's original designs for the classic Marvel superteam. Iron Man, in his clunky gold armor, will feature a removable helmet, while the Wasp and Ant-Man will be sculpted 2-inches tall and come with a special ant accessory they can ride. Look for this boxed set to hit stores in the fall of 1999.

SUPER HOSERS Sasquatch (top right) and his fellow Canucks come to toy shelves soon, eh? Iron Man (above) is back in his original duds for an Avengers box set.

CAPTAIN CAAAVEWOMAAAN!

Cavewoman (right), star of the small-press cult-fave *Cavewoman* comic, gets her own action figure this August courtesy of the gang at Rendition Figures. The bikini-clad vixen has nine points of articulation and comes with **Harmony**, a tiny T-rex sidekick. The Cavewoman action figure, complete with leopard-skin butt floss, will be limited to 20,000 pieces, with a special variant figure limited to 5,000 or 6,000.

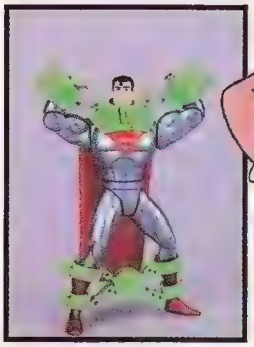


ALPHA FLIGHT PHOTO COURTESY OF TOY BIZ. IRON MAN PHOTO BY PAUL SCHRALLE. CAVEWOMAN PHOTO COURTESY OF BOLT ENTERTAINMENT.

SUPERMAN LIVES!

Superman's going international. If you're a fan of Kenner's Superman Animated Series action figures, there's some good news and some bad news on the horizon. Kenner's decided to stop selling the toys in the United States, opting to continue the line on foreign shores only, including the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Belgium and Mexico. But things ain't all so bad—Diamond Comics Distributors will offer these foreign-only figures for sale through the comic book direct market across the country. On sale now in international release are **Quick-Change Superman**, **Brainiac**, **Lex Luthor**, **Electro-Energy Superman**, **Capture Claw Superman**, **Anti-Kryptonite Superman**, **Fortress of Solitude Superman** and **Strong Arm Superman**. Look for **Supergirl**, **"Power Swing" Superman**, **Metallo**, **X-Ray Vision Superman**, **Power Auger Superman** and **Bizarro** to be added to the international line in the fall.

SUPER HOMBRE *El hijo del Krypton es muy macho, no?* Superman returns to a foreign market. Right: Bizarro. Below: "Power Swing" Superman, X-Ray Vision Superman and Power Auger Superman.



IT *IS* A BIRD Supergirl (above) is on the way to the UK toy market.

SUPERMAN PHOTOS COURTESY OF DIAMOND COMICS DISTRIBUTORS.

WISH LIST

THE 10 FIGURES THAT WIZARD WANTS TO SEE MADE

1) **SOUTH PARK** They've made plush dolls, key-chains, even real-life Cheesy Poofs. So where the hell is the "South Park" action figure line? Make all four kids with special voice chips for hours of catch phrase-spoutin' fun!

2) **THUNDERBOLTS** Marvel's superteam on the run is tailor-made for an action figure line. Pack each team member with his villainous identity for an instant hit.

3) **SPIRIT OF YODA** Made to match Kenner's Spirit of Obi-Wan action figure, this ghostly-blue toy of the wrinkly old Jedi master would be a safe bet for action-figure success.

4) **BASTION** This rascally X-Men baddie is ripe for action-figure glory. Pack Bastion with a special mutant containment gear and add a special bonus Nimrod action figure.

5) **NIGHTWING** Blüdhaven's resident hero's never really gotten the proper toy treatment in his comic book identity. Give Nightwing a special jumpline and extra articulation for endless cool poses.

6) **BLACK WIDOW** She might not have made the cut for the Avengers, but she's made many fans' wish lists. Make her with a spring-loaded Widow's line and a special magnetic wall-crawling feature.

7) **GURI** With Kenner making all sorts of non-movie Star Wars characters, now's the time to give fans Prince Xizor's right-hand gal Guri, from "Shadows of the Empire." Make sure she's got extra articulation for all sorts of hand-to-hand combat action.

8) **AMALGAM** Amalgam Comics might be old news, but fans are still waiting for smooshed-together Marvel and DC characters. Kenner and Toy Biz need to team up to make Dark Claw, Dr. Strangefate and Super-Soldier.

9) **COMMISSIONER GORDON** The Batman animated line needs a Commissioner Gordon figure! Give him a light-up Bat-signal and a regulation police revolver.

10) **HERCULES** Nah, this ain't that Kevin Sorbo chump on TV, we're looking for everybody's favorite Olympian Avenger. Give Herc a special break-away wall accessory so he can show off his strength.

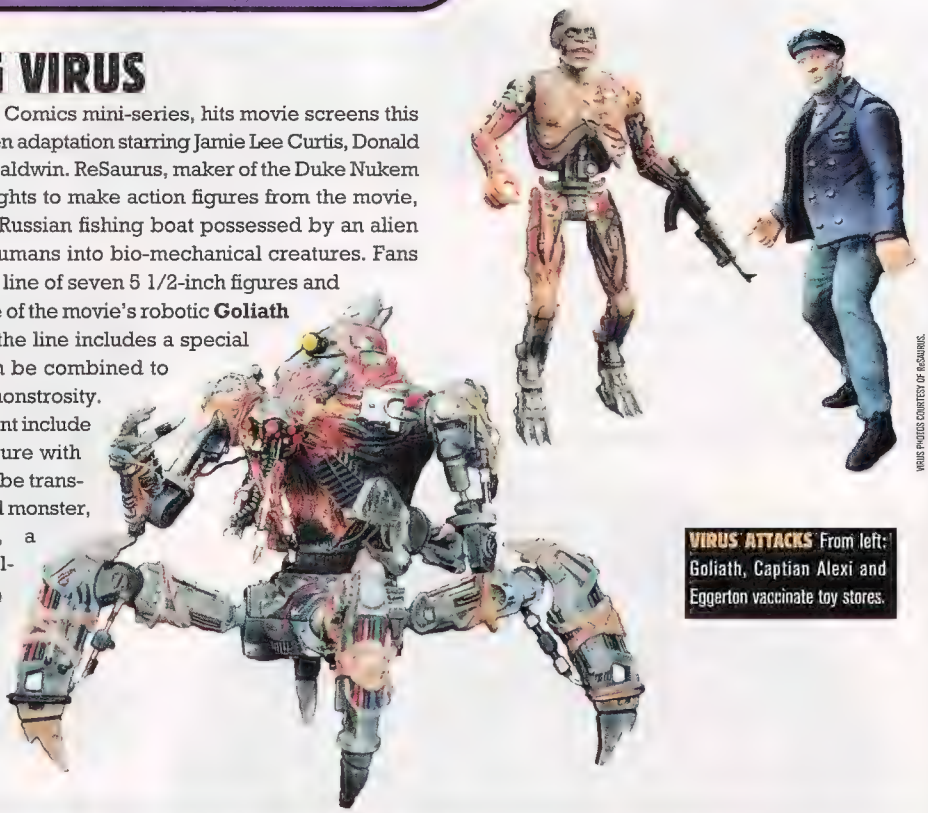
Hey! Keep sending in your requests! You've already made a difference! Drop us a note with your "dream figures" at:

TOY WISH LIST
c/o Wizard Entertainment
151 Wells Avenue
Congers, NY 10920
Or e-mail us at:
WizardTGTC@aol.com

SPREADING VIRUS

Virus, the Dark Horse Comics mini-series, hits movie screens this August in a big-screen adaptation starring Jamie Lee Curtis, Donald Sutherland and William Baldwin. ReSaurus, maker of the Duke Nukem action figures, has the rights to make action figures from the movie, which centers around a Russian fishing boat possessed by an alien presence that mutates humans into bio-mechanical creatures. Fans can look forward to a full line of seven 5 1/2-inch figures and one deluxe 18-inch figure of the movie's robotic **Goliath** creature. Each figure in the line includes a special robot accessory that can be combined to make one giant robotic monstrosity. Highlights of the assortment include **Captain Eggerton**, a figure with removable parts that can be transformed into a mechanized monster, and **Captain Alexi**, a figure with rubbery peel-away skin.

ToyFare Assistant Editor Tom Palmer Jr.'s rubbery peel-away skin has medicinal qualities.



VIRUS PHOTOS COURTESY OF ReSAURUS.

VIRUS ATTACKS From left: Goliath, Captian Alexi and Eggerton vaccinate toy stores.

THE HAUNTING OF THE JLA

The world's gravest super-heroes face the ghosts of their past.

Get scared this July and August in these Annuals:

BATMAN
THE FLASH
AQUAMAN
WONDER WOMAN
GREEN LANTERN
SUPERMAN
MARTIAN MANHUNTER

All ghosts laid to rest in the JLA ANNUAL.

Covers by horror-master Bernie Wrightson.

For the nearest comics shop, call 1-888-COMIC BOOK.

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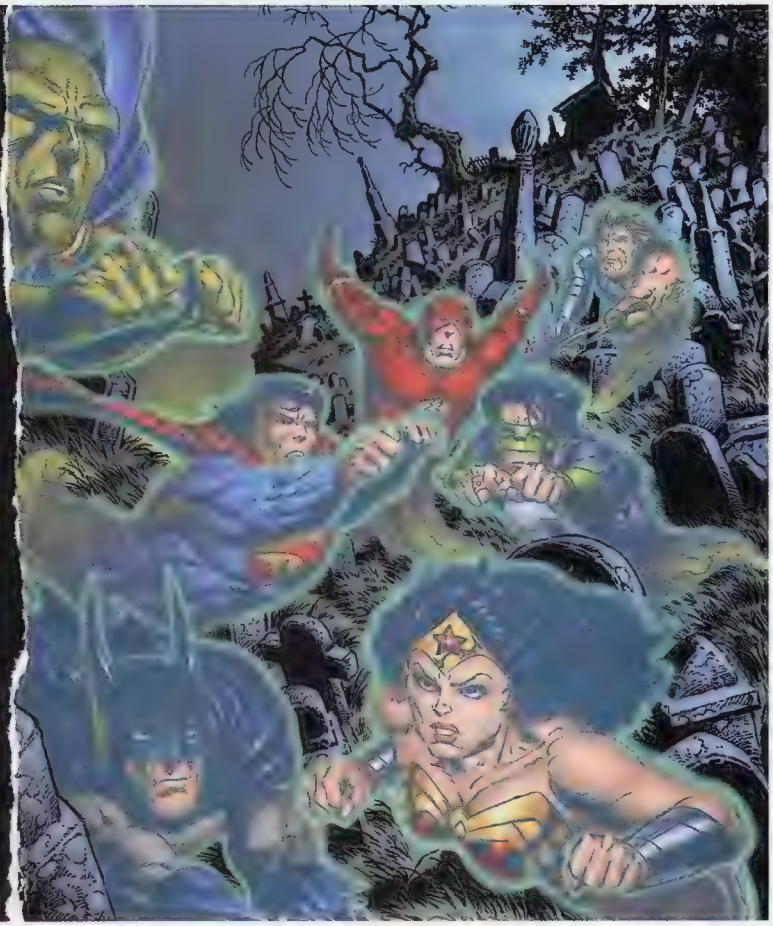


stuff

COMIC BOOK MERCHANDISE YOU CAN BUY...

By David Borak and the *Wizard* Staff

AVAILABLE AT YOUR LOCAL COMICS RETAILER

Who among us doesn't like stuff? Whether it's Thor's Uru Non-Stick Cookware, Ant-Man's Insect Repellent or Crossbreed's Rosary Beads we're all suckers for comic-related merchandise. Each month, *Wizard* strives to show you the latest and super-neatest in comic book statues, posters, pins, magnets, shirts and other goodies.

In short, if it's cool, and if it's stuff, you'll find it here.

JUST A PLATE! You can't eat mashed taters off Supes; this plate is decorative only.

WALL CRAWLER Spider-Man takes to the walls with this resin relief.

RELIEF FOR SPIDEY

Marvel Comics and Illusive Originals present the Amazing Spider-Man Wall Relief ($70). This 3-D rendition of a Spidey comic book cover makes it feel as if Spidey is jumping right out of your wall! The 12" X 14" X 4.5" wall relief is made of cold-cast resin and was airbrushed by hand. Available since June, it can be displayed on a tabletop, or hung on a wall.

PLATE OF JUSTICE

Superman. Batman. Wonder Woman. The Flash. Green Lantern. They're five of the greatest superheroes—and Justice League members—ever, and now they're collected on one super-cool porcelain and 22-karat gold-trimmed plate. The Justice League III Collector's Plate ($35) is 10 inches in diameter, features art by Brian Stelfreeze, and is available right now.

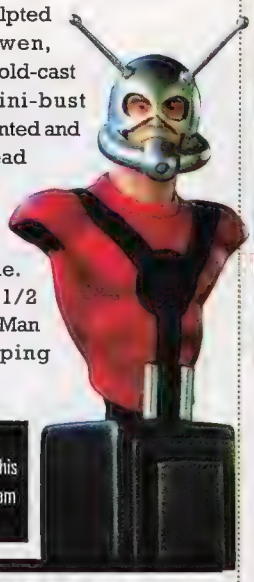
MONSTERS, MASHED!

Start looking for original resin statues and model kits by Randy Bowen that merge two great monsters, King Kong and Godzilla, into one being—Kongzilla! Bowen Designs will bring you a fully painted statue of Kongzilla ($140) or an unassembled, unpainted model kit ($90). The statue and kit each measure a whopping 14 inches tall, and the statue comes with glow-in-the-dark eyes and spine. Kongzilla should be available now.

DOUBLE TROUBLE Godzilla and King Kong fuse to create–Kongzilla!

F(ANT)-ASTIC BUST

Get small. Bowen Designs presents a mini-bust of Avengers mainstay Ant-Man ($25). Sculpted by Randy Bowen, the Ant-Man cold-cast porcelain mini-bust comes fully painted and features the head and shoulders of Ant-Man complete with metal antennae. Measuring 4 1/2 inches tall, Ant-Man began shipping this month.



BUGGIN' Ant-Man, shown 16,853 times his normal size, asks Adam Ant for career tips.

OFF THE MR. BEAT(EN) MUG

Attention coffee drinkers: Moordam Comics presents the 1998 Mr. Beat coffee mug ($13). The 11-oz. mug features caffeine champion Mr. Beat and sports the ever-cool slogan "Will Conform for Coffee." Order them direct from Moordam by calling (330) 799-1037.

JIVIN' JAVA Will read poetry for this cool mug.

ENDLESS PEWTER

DC Comics and Vertigo bring you beautiful statues featuring the Endless from the comic book *Sandman* ($175). Based on sketches by *House of Secrets* artist Teddy Kristiansen, the set of pewter statues includes each of the seven Endless: Dream, Death, Delirium, Desire, Despair, Destruction and Destiny. Each figure is cast in solid pewter and ranges from 1 1/2 to 4 inches tall. Only 3,000 sets will be produced, and they'll be available Oct. 21.

O-MEN Dese guys are endlessly neat.

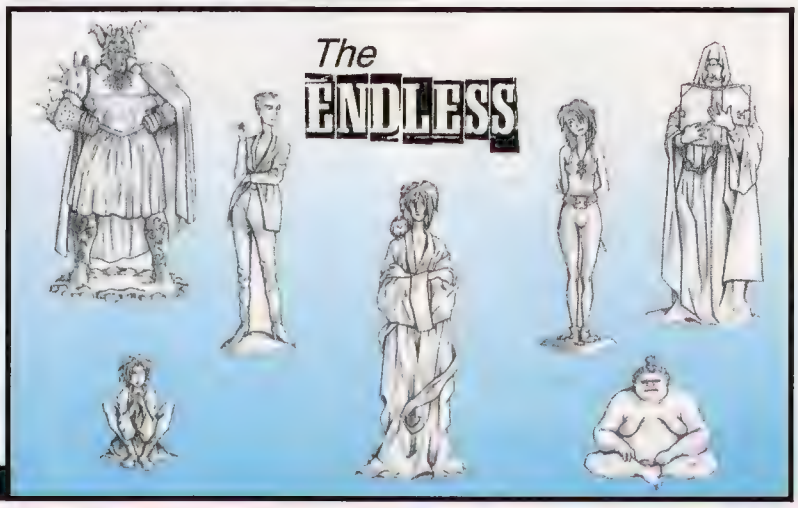
HOT STUFF!!!!!!!!

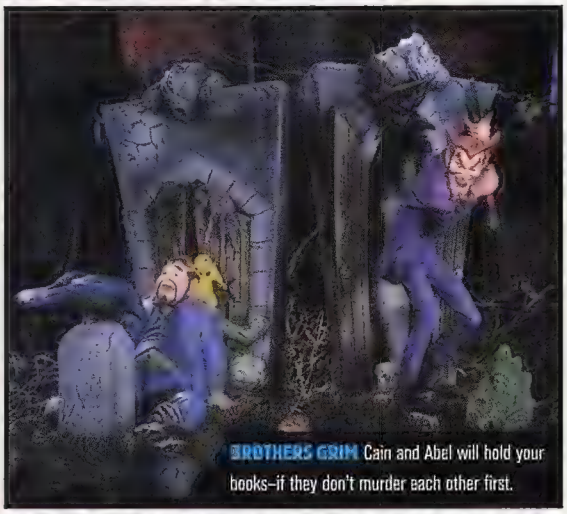
PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

SUPER KINGDOM STATUE

This September, DC Comics presents the first cold-cast porcelain statue of the older and wiser *Kingdom Come* version of Superman ($250). Sculpted by painter Alex Ross, this monochromatic, metallic Superman stands 14 1/2 inches tall (including base) and has a brass name plate imprinted with the words "The Man Of Steel." The statue is limited to 5,000 copies and comes with a certificate of authenticity.

KINGDOM COOL Superman strikes a pensive pose.





BROTHERS GRIM Cain and Abel will hold your books–if they don't murder each other first.

BOOKENDED BROTHERS

Straight from the pages of *Sandman*, Vertigo and DC Comics present the Cain and Abel bookends ($295). Based on designs by Joe Orlando and sculpted by William Paquet, these cold-cast porcelain bookends feature the world's first murderer and his sibling victim. Cain measures 8 1/2" X 6" X 3 3/4" while Abel measures 8" X 6 1/2" X 4 1/2". Limited to just 1,200 editions, each set is individually numbered and comes with a certificate of authenticity. Look for it now.

STATUESQUE KABUKI

In August, Moore Creations presents a fully painted cold-cast porcelain statue of David Mack's female assassin Kabuki ($119). Kabuki clearly displays the tattoos on her back while wielding a wicked-cool weapon. She stands about 8 inches tall and rests on a *faux* marble base.

WARRIOR PRINCESS Be nice to Kabuki–or she'll kill you.

FLAMING SHOT GLASS

Ut! Bob Burden and Dark Horse Comics provide a way to drink your worries away with the Flaming Carrot Shot Glass ($5.95). This 4-inch shot glass features a color picture of alternative comic hero Flaming Carrot on high-quality clear glass. Look for it Aug. 5.

GLASS GUZZLER The first shot is on Flaming Carrot. Ut!

SHIRT OF THE GODS

Don't get this Deity dirty. Hyperwerks brings you the first ever *Deity* T-shirt ($16.95). The T-shirt features the variant cover to *Deity* #1 (the "Baby" cover), and is available in XL only. It has the *Deity* logo in two colors on the front and the four-color comic (featuring the book's teen heroine Jamie) cover on the back. To order, check out the Hyperwerks Website at www.hyperwerks.com or call (310) 306-2518 for automated ordering.

DONNING THE DEITY This grinning fanboy does not come with the shirt. We promise.

Check your local stores for availability of all these funky-fresh products. Or ask your friendly neighborhood comic store to special order 'em for ya!

HEY! Are you a company putting out fun comic-related merchandise like statues, T-shirts, novelties, magnets, etc.? We'd like to preview 'em! Please send all info and sample products to:

Stuff c/o Wizard Entertainment
151 Wells Avenue
Congers, NY 10920-2064

SONGS OF THE WITCHBLADE

A SOUNDTRACK TO THE COMIC BOOK

WITCHBLADE™

AUGUST 98

COMPOSED, CURATED, COBBLED, AND CONTROLLED BY KAT BJELLAND

MUSIC BY PETER STEELE, BUZZ OSBORNE, MEGADETH, SUB CIRCUS, CHRIS VRENNA, STEVE DUDA, RAVE OGILVIE, MIMI GOESE, HOPE NICHOLLS, JIM THIRWELL (FOETUS), MIHO HATORI (CIBO MATTO), ARTO LINDSAY (DNA) KIM FOX, LYDIA LUNCH AND A CAST OF THOUSANDS.

Produced and mixed by Dave "Rave" Ogilvie
(Thanks for the loan Puppy and Trent)

Executive Producers
Marc Silvestri and Brad Foxhoven (Top Cow Productions)
and Tim Carr (Dreamworks Records)

TOP COW PRODUCTIONS

DREAMWORKS

www.topcow.com

OF THE WITCHBLADE

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video STUFF

By Matthew Danish

Video killed the radio star, but who's complaining? Certainly not us. Welcome to "Video Stuff," a column where we let loose with news, previews, reviews and super-secret codes for the hottest, most spanktacular console and PC games around. Fire up the controllers...it's video game time.

TURNER'S SUNNY 'SKIES'

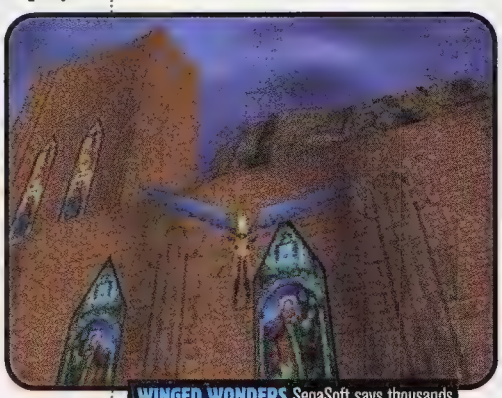
He made *Witchblade* sing, dance and race up the charts. Now, artist Michael Turner is going to send video game fans soaring. Turner's hard at work designing characters and land-based elements for SegaSoft's *Skies*, a 3-D, online role-playing adventure for the PC.

"It's like an *Ultima Online*-type thing, but it's a full 3-D world and all the characters fly," Turner said about *Skies*. "Parts of the Earth are shattered and you can fly from parts of the Earth to the other parts.

"It's like the Earth is not a whole globe anymore," he said, "and so I've designed all these characters who have wings or flying abilities. You can be these characters, go on adventures with each other or fight or buy armor and weapons in town—it's a fully functioning world."

Turner said *Skies* is being designed to play as a multi- or single-player game and, according to SegaSoft's PR arm, Access Communications, the game will accommodate thousands of players simultaneously. As game characters learn and evolve, their looks will change to reflect that progress; players will be able to determine a character's status just by its appearance.

SegaSoft promised to release *Skies* exclusively on SegaSoft's game network, Heat.Net, before year's end.



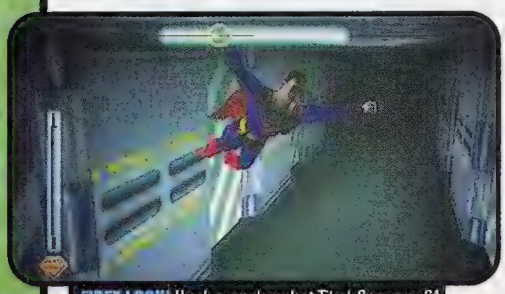
WINGED WONDERS SegaSoft says thousands will be able to fly Mike Turner's sunny 'Skies.'

SEEING STARS (TREK AND WARS)...

The Klingons are coming! So is the Empire! This fall and holiday season will see the release of *Star Trek: Klingon Academy* and *Star Wars: Force Commander* for PCs.

Force Commander, by LucasArts, will offer fully 3-D combat in a *Command and Conquer*- and *Warcraft*-type combat game. According to LucasArts, the game will allow players to command the ground- and space-based forces of either the Rebels or the Empire, on such varied locations as Hoth, Tatooine, Corellia, Yavin 4 and Coruscant.

Interplay's *Star Trek: Klingon Academy* lets players step into the boots of Klingon recruit Torlek, command various Klingon starships, and fight a simulated war against the evil Starfleet. The game also features 30 different starships and never-before-seen weapons.



FIRST LOOK! Here's a sneak peek at Titus' *Superman 64* for the Nintendo 64. The game should be out by summer's end–but don't count your Kryptonite.

'MESSIAH' MADNESS

Messiah, a 3-D action-adventure game for the Sony PlayStation and PC, will debut in September—but not before a good bit of controversy. The game has drawn the ire of some religious groups, according to published reports, who are protesting the game's seeming lack of faith. *Messiah* has players maneuver a cherub to possess more than 30 different characters, using the possessee's diverse strengths and characteristics in an overall strategy whose ultimate objective is to find and confront Satan, who also appears in the game. Players who call upon the game's help feature will hear the voice of God (as portrayed by an actor, of course)! ■

UP AHEAD

GOT GON? WRASSLERS GO TO WAR, BIZARRE BIO FREAKS TAKE TO THE AIR AND MORE!

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TEKKEN 3

MANUFACTURER: Namco
PLATFORM: Sony PlayStation
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $49.95, available now

Dying time's now. Heihachi Mishima, leader of the Mishima Financial Empire, has announced the commencement of "The King of the Iron Fist Tournament 3," an all-out, blood and guts, martial-arts tournament.

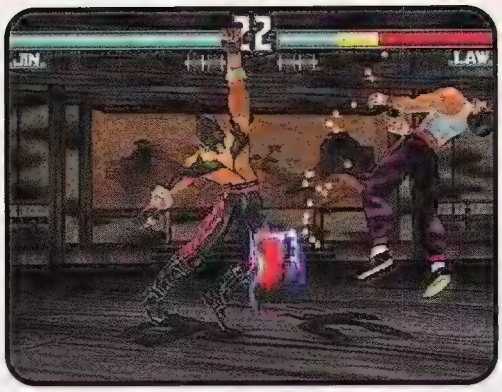
Forget all that has come before—*Tekken 3* is, simply put, the mother of all 3-D fighting games. Offering souped-up graphics, a new series of fighting countermeasures, cool fighters and kick-ass game modes, *Tekken 3* is video game nirvana.

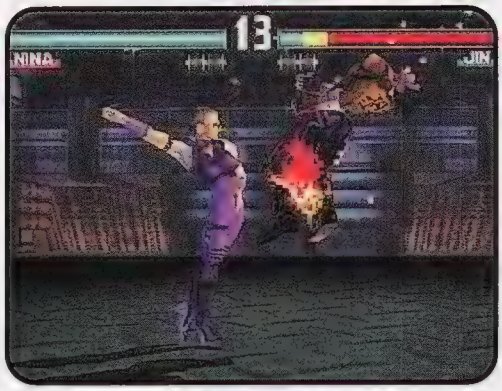
Players can fight as one of 23 martial artists. Beyond the standard kick, punch and throw options, the game allows all its characters to sidestep attacks, and also to reverse an opponent's maneuvers—as well as his reversals. While the controls are deceptively simple and easy to learn, each character possesses approximately 25-40 separate attacks.

Graphically, the game strains the PlayStation's impressive capabilities to the max. *Tekken*'s characters are fluid, eye-popping wonders and the backgrounds, music and slow-motion replays create a dramatic tone for the tournament's battles.

TRY IT... If you like *Virtua Fighter 2*, *Tekken 2*, or just want to hear the glorious snapping of your enemy's bones, you will achieve spiritual oneness with *Tekken 3*.

In addition, the game offers all of the special modes—sudden death, arcade, survival, etc.—that fight fans have come to expect. There's even the "Tekken Force" mode, in which players move through *Double Dragon*-style horizontally scrolling screens and must defeat several levels of street thugs and their bosses—as well as "Tekken Ball" mode where players can engage in a deadly game of volleyball. ■





'TEKKEN', A BEATIN' Martial artists Jin (above) and Nina (below) demonstrate the delicate art of ass-whuppin'!

WWF WARZONE

MANUFACTURER: Acclaim
PLATFORMS: Sony PlayStation, Nintendo 64
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $49.95, Summer 1998

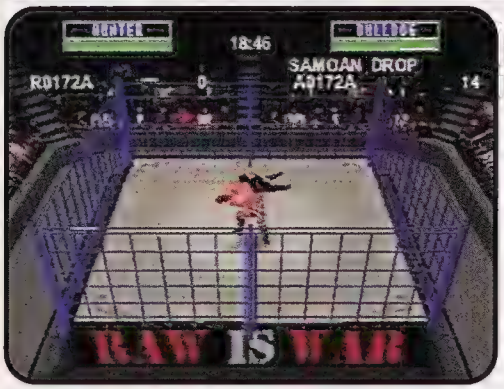
Ka-boom. That's the sound a body makes when it's slammed onto the hard canvas of a wrestling ring. Get used to it.

This summer, Acclaim will be drop-kicking *WWF Warzone* onto both the PlayStation and N64. The early preview copy submitted to *Wizard* revealed the early stages of an unfinished, but likely to be spectacular, video game. Players can choose from more than a dozen WWF wrestlers, including the Undertaker, Shawn Michaels, Stone Cold Steve Austin, etc. The polygonal fighters can execute a plethora of both scientific and hard-core wrestling moves that would please even Hulk Hogan: DDTs, back-breakers and a host of other punishing maneuvers.

Another strong point is the game's gimmick modes—tag teams, single-elimination tournaments, cage-and-ladder matches, weapon matches and up to four-player battle royales. There's even a cool feature that lets users create and customize their own wrestlers.

The PlayStation disc previewed had a nifty soundtrack featuring crowd chants, drunken bozos shouting epithets, and commentary by WWF owner/showman supreme Vince McMahon. The only real disappointment was a dearth of wrestling managers. What kind of world would wrestling be without such scumbag managers as "Classy" Freddie Blassie or The Grand Wizard of Wrestling? And alas, there's no comedian Andy Kaufman in wrestling tights making an ass of himself. ■

TRY IT... If you like *WCW vs. nWo: World Tour*, Hulk Hogan movies or *WWF: In Your House*, put a midget in the sleeper hold and run to get *WWF Warzone*.



WAR IS HECK *Warzone* lets users fight inside a cage (above) or engage in leg-breaking fun (below).

MORE→

EXCLUSIVE • OFFER

Get this cool 8-inch Madman action figure with a totally new Frank Einstein head! It s an exclusive, never-before-seen toy that we specially commissioned just for this issue! But, man, is he limited, so get off your kiester and order the snappiest action figure since G.I. Joe with Kung Fu Grip! It s just 10 clams (plus four more for postage and handling). So send that 14 bucks in today for your limited-edition, exclusive Madman action figure!

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W84

BIO FREAKS

MANUFACTURER: Midway
PLATFORMS: Sony PlayStation, Nintendo 64
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $49.95, available now

The Freaks have arrived—a helicopter-handed space warrior, beautiful warrior women with swords and attitudes, as well as reptilian aliens who'll claw your eyes out.

With 10 different fighting terrains, ranging from underwater arenas to battlefields dense with pits, ledges and obstacles, *Bio Freaks* presents a unique perspective on the time-honored, one-player, 3-D fighting theme. The game has an arbitrary feel—it's part parody fighter, part medieval armored gore, with a dash of sci-fi fantasy and a rotating roulette wheel of cool, kick-ass fighters.

Freaks' 3-D graphics are seamless, adding immensely to the ominous bent. Hit a foe with a well-timed blow, and blood will spurt out from the wound and momentarily stain the TV screen.

Monsters can soar up to fight from ledges or walk into pits. Each fighter has customized moves, but tactics seem to divide into in-fighting, mid-range and long-range maneuvers which fit different purposes and strategies. Against a smaller, weaker opponent, players might want to crowd and bully and butt heads, while against a giant they might want to use the jetpack to fight from the air.

TRY IT... If you slaver over *House of the Dead, Beast Busters* or *Mortal Kombat IV*, then you'll love *Bio Freaks*.

The battles are gory. The fighters are comical and graphically interesting. The shifting battle sites—which players can select manually prior to each fight—are not mere decoration but can actually impact each fight's outcome. The Freak Zone, it seems, is open for business, the business being, of course, killing.

And business is very, very good. ■

FREAKY-DEAKY Zipperhead (above) and his shark-faced pal want to introduce you to their close personal friend–pain.

CHEATSHEET

SPECIAL MOVES & SECRET CODES

TREKKIN' WITH 'TEKKEN'

Want to kick some severe booty in *Tekken 3?* Just follow these instructions to the video game promised land.

- UNLOCK "TEKKEN BALL" MODE–This mode lets users play volleyball against their opponents–and unlock secret characters, to boot! All you have to do to get this option is win the game (in "Arcade" mode) as all 10 original, selectable characters.
- PLAY AS GON THE DINOSAUR–Manga dinosaur Gon will become a playable character if you beat him in "Tekken Ball" mode. (He's the first opponent.)
- THE MYSTERIOUS DR. B.–You'll not find a more unlikely playable character than Dr. B, the white-haired mad scientist creator of fighter Yoshimitsu. B becomes selectable after you beat "Tekken Force" mode four times in a row.
- YOUR PANDA PAL?–Select Kuma the bear and press start. You'll play as the cutest, most devastating Panda Bear around.

webline

IT CAME FROM THE WORLD WIDE WEB

user.aol.com/coomwalles/stl.html
Star Trek links including the Klingon Language Institute for those interested in learning that tongue, and a Star Trek newsgroups link which lists every Star Trek newsgroup on the Internet.

www.wwf.com/
The official site of the World Wrestling Federation.

www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/Heights/7811/tekken3.htm
Lots of stuff on *Tekken 3,* possibly the greatest fighter of all time.

www.interworldnet.net/users/fifbeat/Lee.html
Interesting Bruce Lee facts and links.

www.gelservices.com/hsprof.html
A demonic possession profile for professionals whose work may bring them in contact with the demon-possessed.

IT'S ALMOST HERE!

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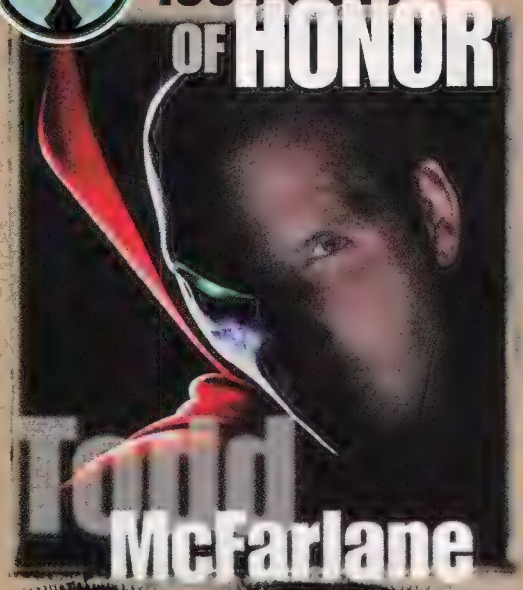

Todd McFarlane

CREATOR OF SPAWN

Walter Koenig*

BABYLON 5

Claudia Christian*

Jason Carter*

STAR WARS®

MEN BEHIND THE MASKS

DARTH VADER | BOBA FETT | R2-D2 | GREEDO

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HOMEMADE HEROES

THE ARENA FOR FAN-MADE ACTION FIGURES

HEY, QUIT YER WHININ' YA BABIES. They don't make figures of your favorite characters? You think you could make better ones than already exist? Either way, it's time to put up or shut up. The figures you see here were crafted by ordinary readers just like you. Starting with simple store-bought action figures, these go-getters combined a little imagination with some stuff from around the house. They will now be judged by the highest authority...us!

GRAND PRIZE WINNER

EXCALIBUR

CRAIG AND JULIE FREY of Pittsburgh, Pa.

From left to right: Phoenix emerged from a Toy Biz X-Men Monster Wars Mystique body and a Playmates Star Trek: Deep Space Nine Kira Nerys head. Nightcrawler?...Your guess is as good as our's. Captain Britain was generated from a Toy Biz Electro-Spark Captain America and some modeling putty. Meggan was once a Toy Biz Ninja Psylocke with a Toy Biz Robot Fighters Storm hair. Shadowcat phased into existence from a Kenner Batman & Robin Poison Ivy and some random paper products. And Lockheed hails from a Kenner Jurassic Park dinosaur with wings attached from an unnamed Batman accessory.

WHAT WE GAVE AWAY!

The supremely skillful Grand Prize Winner receives a Death Dealer statue.

Muchas gracias to Dark Horse Comics for providing the goods.

RUNNERS-UP

ZATANNA (FROM BATMAN: THE ANIMATED SERIES)
Ken Goach of Austin, Texas
Toy Biz Generation X's White Queen figure provided the body for the animated beauty Zatanna, who has Super Sculpey for hair and magician accessories for props.

NOMI SUNRIDER AND ULIC QEL-DROMA (FROM STAR WARS: TALES OF THE JEDI)
Jason Smith of Ann Arbor, Mich.
The great Jedi Nomi Sunrider is a repainted Kenner Power of the Force Slave Girl Leia, while the tragic Jedi figure Ulic Qel-Droma is a combination of a Kenner Carbonite Han Solo body and a Playmates Star Trek Jean-Luc Picard head.

JAY GARRICK FLASH
Richard Medley of Salinas, Calif.
Using a Kenner Batman & Robin Bruce Wayne, Richard turned the Dark Knight into a flash of light as the original Flash, Jay Garrick. The helmet is made from Super Sculpey.

STAR WARS LEGOS
Paul Stringer of New Hope, Minn.
Legos. May the Force and some interlocking blocks be with you. Stringer is waaay ahead of his time—pretty soon Star Wars Legos may be hitting toy stores everywhere. From left: Princess Leia, Ben Kenobi, Chewbacca, Han Solo, Stormtrooper, Darth Vader, Stormtrooper, Imperial Guard and Boba Fett. Aren't they just darling?

Do you want in on the fun? To enter the homemade figure contest, send well-lit, clear, color photographs **(No Polaroids, and put 'em in a cool or funny pose!)**, along with your name, address, a DETAILED DESCRIPTION of how you created your figure, and your full phone number (including area code) to:

SUBMIT!

Homemade Heroes
c/o Wizard Press
PO Box 118
Congers, NY 10920-0118

CHARACTER PROFILE

MAX FARADAY

BY MATTHEW BRADY

Max Faraday, college student and young-turk deliveryman, tops his pizza with danger. Unlocking the mysterious "Creation Equation," Max becomes enmeshed in a war of good vs. evil—a war where both sides seek to control him for their own ends.

VITAL STATS

Real Name: Max Faraday
Age: 20
Height: 5' 8"
Weight: 175 lbs.
Hair Color: Blond
Eye Color: Green
First Appearance: *Divine Right: The Adventures of Max Faraday* #1
Currently Appearing in: *Divine Right: The Adventures of Max Faraday*
Major Enemies: The Rath, Cardinal Lazarus, lack of womanly companionship

ORIGIN

Max Faraday thought he was living the good life—majoring in physics at the University of San Diego and delivering pizzas. One night, Max and his best friend, Devan Lawless, were surfing the Net and doing a little hacking.

Unknown to Max, International Operations agent Christie Blaze had stolen the powerful "Creation Equation" from its keepers, who released the otherworldly Rath to stop Blaze and retrieve it at all costs. Commanded by Cardinal Lazarus, the Rath sought to use the Equation to bring about Armageddon.

Blaze uploaded the Equation to an I.O. database just before being killed by Rath forces. Innocently hacking into the I.O database, Max retrieved the Equation and, after forwarding a copy to his Internet-"girlfriend" Susanna, read it. Reading the Equation released immense power, destroying Max's computer and nearly killing him.

Though he didn't know it at the time, Max's life had forever changed—he was now a player in a game of cosmic consequence, possessing powers he has only begun to comprehend.

RECENTLY...

Despite protests by his sister, Jenny, Max went to work immediately following the explosion, with Devan along to keep an eye on him. On a delivery run, Rath Bloodhounds attacked Max and Devan. While the two defended themselves valiantly with pizzas and a baseball bat, the Rath forces proved to be too great for them. Just as the two were about to be killed, Max's newly acquired All-Power instinctively kicked in, destroying the Rath forces.

Beyond space and time, Christie Blaze was resurrected by Exotica, a warrior of the Fallen. Comprising three mystical warriors, the Fallen seek to preserve order within the universe, and are therefore sworn to protect the bearer of the Creation Equation.

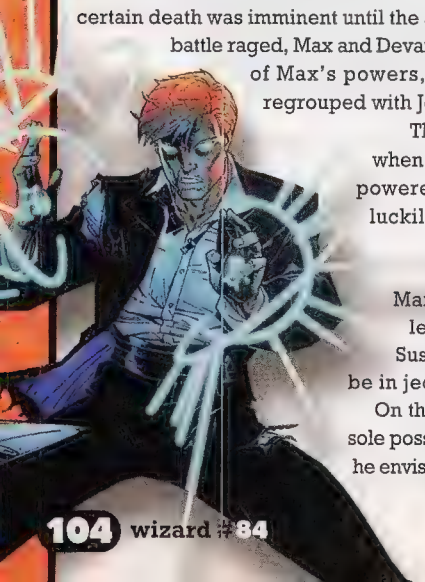
Back at the battle site, Rath reinforcements arrived, but just as they were about to strike, the Fallen warrior Tobruk killed them. Tobruk then quickly explained his destiny and role in the conflict to an unbelieving Max.

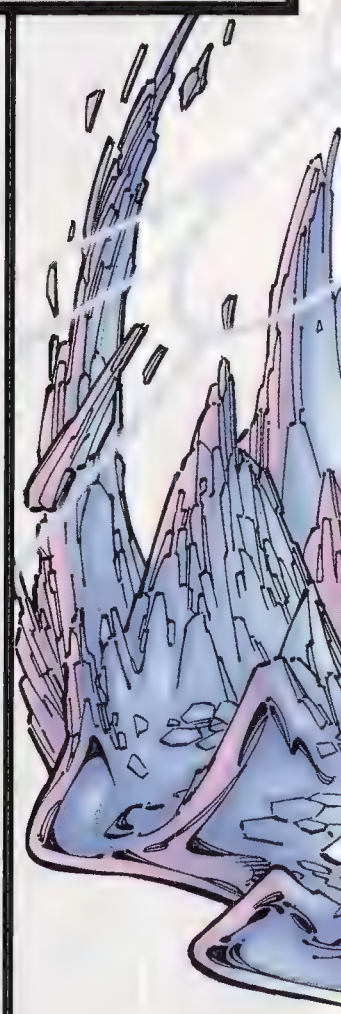
Even with arrival of Tobruk, additional Rath forces quickly outnumbered the three, and certain death was imminent until the arrival of the rest of the Fallen, along with Blaze. As the battle raged, Max and Devan agreed that their best bet was to flee, and with the help of Max's powers, the two made it back to Max's house, where they regrouped with Jenny.

The three attempted to piece together the night's events, when former I.O. director John Lynch arrived with the super-powered Caitlin Fairchild. Lynch was hunting for Blaze and, luckily for him, Blaze showed up at Max's house with the Fallen, sparking a fight between Lynch and Blaze.

Manifesting his powers fully for the first time, Max broke up the fight. He then marshaled his forces, leading the heroes to St. Louis, where he believed his Susanna—who'd received a copy of the Equation—would be in jeopardy.

On the flight, Exotica taught Max more about his powers. As sole possessor of the Creation Equation, Max can create anything he envisions simply by imagining it. Exotica noted that Max's mind





is uncommonly fertile, in essence giving him unlimited power so long as he can focus his mind on his powers.

Upon reaching Susanna's apartment, the group realized it had arrived too late—Rath forces, led by the Coda assassin Cassandra, had already kidnapped Susanna and taken her to another realm of reality. Realizing his responsibility for Susanna's situation, Max followed, catapulting himself into a realm where sorcery is the norm, and science is an all-but-forgotten art.

LOOKING AHEAD

Max's sojourn in this alternate world will last from issues #5-#8, giving readers a hearty serving of swords, sorcery, monsters and a damsel in distress. While he's away, Max will grow both in power and physical stature. After all, fighting your way through a medieval land does wonders for the pecs and any supernatural powers you might have.

"It's almost a 'Wizard of Oz' type odyssey," series creator Jim Lee says. "Max has a definite quest while he's there, and there is a guy somewhere in that world who knows all, and he has to find him to complete his quest and get back home."

Meanwhile, back on Earth, things aren't all wine and roses for Blaze and company. The Rath forces still want their hides, and are more than willing to kill a few innocents to get them.

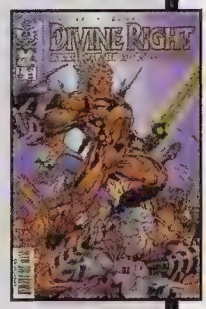
Where does it all lead? Lee ain't saying just yet, but he does have a firm ending in mind, somewhere between issues #15-#20. (W)

Straight outta North Carolina, freelance writer Matthew Brady tops his pizza with...pepperoni?

HIGHLIGHTS

RECOMMENDED READING

Despite some deadline problems, this book has great buzz. Stunning art by Jim Lee has created high demand, so finding said issues is gonna be tougher than beef jerky. Here're the goodies:



Divine Right #1–Pizza, dames, death and danger. A photocopy-shop slaughter. Max Faraday opts for an Andy Jackson and downloads a heap of trouble.

Divine Right #2–How do you stop a Rath demon from charging? Try a pepperoni pizza and a baseball bat–not that it'll help much. Plus, Christie Blaze learns that if you die in issue #1, you'd better be prepared to kick some butt in issue #2.

Divine Right #4–Christie Blaze and John Lynch duke it out, behemoth Tobruk eats a Taco Hellito, and Max discovers he's packing more power than he can imagine.

TOP 10 HEROES & VILLAINS

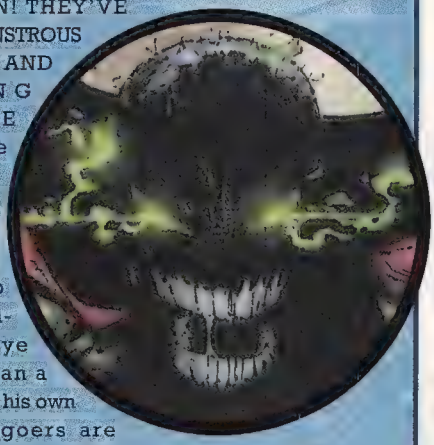
This list doesn't track the number of copies which a specific character sells each month. It doesn't pay attention to any kind of sales meter. This list is a roster of the 10 comic book characters with the strongest fan following—nothing more, nothing less.

1 WOLVERINE

Wanna know what *real* mean looks like? Just take a picture of this. Wolverine is all about pure mean, with no additives, preservatives or artificial colors. Speaking of preservatives, Wolvie's been kickin' ass and not even *bothering* to take names for... oh...how long now? A hundred years? Maybe more? It's hard to tell, 'cause he's got them damn memory implants floatin' around in his noggin that may (or may not) be true. Chances are, he's older than Dick Clark and *still* stompin' bad guys' kidneys into the dust, which is a big part of the reason he's the kiddies' fave. Meanness sells.

2 SPAWN

Ever wake up with eye boogers? You know—those little green, crusty things that accumulate in the corners of your eyes after you take a nice, long nap? Well, even if you haven't, Spawn has. AND THEY'VE TAKEN ON A LIFE OF THEIR OWN! THEY'VE GROWN TO MONSTROUS PROPORTIONS AND ARE EATING TOKYO AS WE SPEAK! They're so big and so wild that we hear the villain in the "Spawn" movie sequel is going to be a giant, sentient Spawn eye booger. How can a man fight against his own mucus? Moviegoers are *dying* to know!

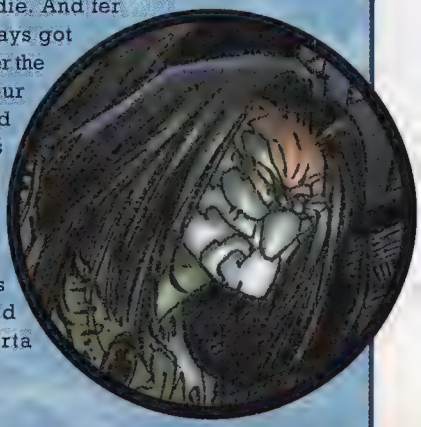


3 WITCHBLADE

No one ever thinks about the *practical* uses of Sara Pezzini's Witchblade. Sure, the ancient mystical gauntlet can fire blasts of hellacious hellfire and make nifty, scaly armor to protect Sara from super-baddies, but can it help out in her day-to-day life? Sure it can! Let us count the ways: The Witchblade is a great can opener, a serviceable catcher's mitt, an all-purpose lockpick, a barbecue skewer *and* it makes a great swizzle stick for gin rickeys. Hey! It's got more uses than a Swiss Army knife! And for considerably less than $19.95, plus shipping.

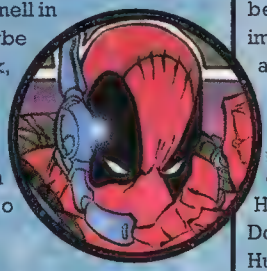
4 THE DARKNESS

Yeah, it's gotta be tough to be Jackie Estacado, this generation's bearer of The Darkness. For starters, that bitchy Angelus chick is always after your ass and lookin' to kill you dead. For seconds, you can't risk having sex, 'cause the minute you father a child, you also pass along the Darkness power and kinda...die. And for thirds, you've always got that damn plate over the bottom half of your face, making it hard to enjoy a Wendy's Spicy Chicken combo with Biggie fries. Oh, well. The fact that Jackie's got a comic that sells umpteen thousand copies a month sorta soothes the pain.



5 DEADPOOL

All right! Deadpool's got one of those cool microphone headsets, just like Madonna! Maybe he'll follow in her footsteps, take up a singing career, wear bizarre cone-shaped bras and star opposite Rosie O'Donnell in a baseball movie! Then again, maybe not. After all, being Marvel's sick, twisted, psycho, sadistic (But always funny!) hitman-for-hire is what got Deadpool to the top in the first place. Plus, if he *really* followed in Madonna's footsteps, he'd have to sleep with Dennis Rodman. Brrrr!

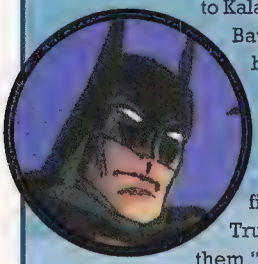


6 HULK

"Rharghh! Hulk grit teeth! Hulk care not about proper dental hygiene or care for molars!" Maybe not, but we're betting someone does. Can you image being the Hulk's dentist? The average Joe-off-the-street gets a bit annoyed when a trip to the dentist hurts the ol' chompers. Imagine the rage of the gamma-irradiated Hulk when his dentist strikes a Hulkish nerve! Memo to the dentists of the Marvel Universe: Don't take chances. Load up on the laughing gas when the Hulk is in the chair.

7 BATMAN

So maybe the Witchblade has a lot of practical uses. Batman's got a utility belt that's got the 'Blade beat from here to Kalamazoo. In addition to the much-seen Batarang and Bat-grappling hook, the belt also has a rarely seen Bat-Howitzer, Bat-Ping-Pong paddle and Bat-"Sweatin' to the Oldies" cassette, just in case Batman starts poundin' down too many Ho-Hos and finds himself gettin' a bit paunchy. Trust us. All these popped up in one o' them "Elseworlds" stories.



8 THE THING

It's clobberin' time! And no one dishes out a good clobber like the Yancy Street Special, the ever-lovin' blue-eyed Thing. Ben Grimm isn't the strongest hero on the block (not that he's a pantywaist by any stretch of the imagination), but he's definitely got the biggest heart. When the chips are down and your back's to the wall, you *know* you can count on the Thing. He's a heavy-duty, no-quittin' hard-hittin' machine, and fans have always dug that about him.

9 CAPTAIN AMERICA

Hey, Cap! Open yer eyes! How ya gonna fight crime 'n' stuff with yer peepers shut? Well, if there's one man who could, it would be Captain America: Marvel's best fighter. Hell, half the *non*-superpowered guys in the Marvel Universe are deadlier than Jackie Chan armed with a weed-whacker. And why? 'Cause Cap taught 'em how to tussle. Hell, Jarvis, the Avengers' butler, could whup ass on a whole convention worth of fanboys all by himself. He's Cap-trained, baby.

10 PREACHER

Looks like good ol' boy Jesse Custer's got himself a grin from ear-to-ear! Wonder why? Could it be that he's happy to be part of this list? Maybe he's heard that razor blades are on sale and now he can finally get rid of that 5 o'clock shadow. Or maybe he knows that *Preacher* is one of the best-selling, most literate and still in-your-face-shocking books to be found on the racks today. It's probably a bit of all three.

MORT OF THE MONTH

ONE LAME-ASS CHARACTER

SIDEWINDER

No, he's not just some chump who spent too much time under a tanning lamp. He's Sidewinder, the financial-analyst supervillain from Kenosha, Wisc.!

It seems mild-mannered Seth Voelker tired of being a number cruncher for Marvel's evil Roxxon Corporation, so he volunteered (!) for "mutagenic alteration." Since they hadn't yet had their morning coffee, all Roxxon's eggheads could do was make Voelker really friggin' ugly and plant a computer chip in his head that activated a teleportation cloak. Alas, though, Sidewinder couldn't teleport fast enough to avoid getting his ass kicked by Captain America and the Thing on a regular basis.

This goof must have made the folks back in Wisconsin *real* proud.

MORTOMETER

PICKS

THE MUST-READ COMICS SHIPPING IN JULY

book of the month

TRANSMETROPOLITAN #13

HELIX/DC COMICS "Year of the Bastard," Part 1 (of 6). Super-bastard and star reporter Spider Jerusalem has resolved to get the heck out of the city. To scratch up the cash, he's gonna wade neck-deep in political intrigue and make good on his book deal. By Warren Ellis, Darick Robertson and Rodney Ramos. Ellis says, "Spider's got a new assistant who manages to hate him more than the last one did. And he's being forced to write about the election, which he doesn't want to do. The last time he did that, he got horribly famous and it eventually drove him out of the city entirely." **MR $2.50**

300 #3 (OF 5)

DARK HORSE Suck it up, maggots! The fight for freedom's on, and 300 ancient Spartans are duking it out with King Xerxes and his righteously bad-ass Persian army. So pick up a spear you miserable piece of turtle dung, because Xerxes is going to make a peace offering—one that's sure to be rejected. *Cry havoc!* These real-life historical happenings (the Spartans' stand at Thermopylae, that is) are brought to you by Frank Miller and Lynn Varley. And Miller, who actually went to Greece to research this book, says, "This is not going to be the kind of chaotic battle you'll see in 'Conan,' for instance. This is very organized, almost machine-like, combat." **MR $2.95**

AKIKO #26

SIRIUS Fourth-grade fountain of funk Akiko is out to spread goodwill on the planet Smoo by finding a potion to kill Professor Lunderdorf's chill before he becomes horribly ill—and maybe deathly still. Dig it, though, the medicine's being guarded by Bornstone the giant, who hoards the stuff like it was an exclusive polybagged Chromium edition of *The Darkness* with gold pages and a $100 bill used as a bookmark. Akiko and her friends are gonna have to come up with one hefty bribe to get the goods. By Mark Crilley. **$2.50**

AQUAMAN #47

DC COMICS "Shadows on the Water," Part 2 (of 2). This ain't no "Little Mermaid." Grumpy old Aquaman and his chipper younger self jump into his ex-wife Mera's dimension, running headlong into the alien threat of Nemo. Nemo (who ain't no scurvy submarine captain in this book) has kidnapped Aquaman's wife Mera and is planning to divest the dimension of all its water. By Dan Abnett, Andy Lanning, Jim Calafiore and Peter Palmiotti. **$1.95**

THE AVENGERS #8

MARVEL The *Wizard* triathlon consists of drinking, eating Cheez-Doodles and then making some plumber very, very unhappy with what comes next. The superpowered guy Triathlon is out to maybe stop an airplane hijacking, maybe save the life of someone near and dear to the Avengers' butler, and maybe even join up with Earth's Mightiest Heroes. By Kurt Busiek, George Pérez and Al Vey. "When George and I started on *Avengers,*" Busiek

MR TITLES DENOTED WITH AN MR CONTAIN MATERIAL THAT'S SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS.

says, "[Marvel Editor-in-Chief] Bob Harras said he thought it would be neat if we worked up a new character or two who could possibly become Avengers, sort of in the tradition of such characters as the Vision and Mantis and the Black Knight. So George and I put our heads together and Triathlon is the first one you'll see." **$1.99**

BOX OFFICE POISON #10

ANTARCTIC Sell your soul, kiddies, and there's the devil to pay. Cartoonist Irving Flavor created the world's most popular superhero, Nightstalker, and then promptly sold the rights to the heartless conglomerate known as Zoom Comics. Flavor and his young assistant Ed are out to get back the rights to the character, which has as much chance of happening as a Milli Vanilli reunion. By Alex Robinson. **MR $2.95**

CAPTAIN AMERICA #9

MARVEL Something lurks in Steve Rogers' (a.k.a. Captain America) apartment, and it ain't a dust bunny the size of Cleveland. While Cap deals with the intruder and attempts to regain some semblance of a private life, his ex-girlfriend and super spy Sharon Carter is out investigating public figures, who've all gone insane. And don't look now, but the trail leads directly to...the Rhino? By Mark Waid, Andy Kubert and Jesse Delperdang. **$1.99**

CAPTAIN AMERICA: SENTINEL OF LIBERTY #1

MARVEL Listen up, true Americans, as writer Mark Waid tells you about *Sentinel of Liberty's* first issue—one that thrusts Cap into the 21st century and back again to the time of his revival: "In essence, we have never revealed how Captain America and Agent 13 [Sharon Carter] learned each other's names, learned each other's identities and

newreleases

FIRST TIME OUT

THE CURSE OF DRACULA #1 **(Dark Horse)** He doesn't drink *wine*. He just sucks blood. What do you expect from Dracula, lord of the undead? **$2.95**

FATHOM #1 **(Top Cow/Image)** Meet the mysterious undersea heroine Aspen, and learn why, when she's naked and submerged, water bubbles always seem to obscure her naughty bits. **$2.50**

LADY DEATH: RETRIBUTION **(Chaos!)** Revenge is served cold as a corpse when Lady Death, who's imprisoned on the planet-sized castle of Black Rift, turns on her captors. **$2.95**

LEGENDS OF THE DC UNIVERSE 80-PAGE GIANT #1 **(DC Comics)** Untold tales are, well, told of DC heroes from Adam Strange to the Teen Titans. **$4.95**

MADMAN/THE JAM #1 **(Dark Horse)** Quirky superheroes Madman and the Jammer enter a house of illusions where they encounter weirdness and giant bugs. **$2.95**

MARVEL ANNUAL '98 BOOKS **(Marvel)** A lone figure is hunting heroes from the Avengers and the Squadron Supreme in *The Avengers/Squadron Supreme '98*, and in *The Uncanny X-Men/Fantastic Four '98*, a twisted madman uses Pyscho Man's technology against the aforementioned superhero teams. **$2.99 each**

NEW GODS SECRET FILES #1 **(DC Comics)** A secret is like a fine wine. Uncork the truth behind why Orion and Big Barda joined the JLA and then smell that bouquet. **$4.95**

NIGHTHAWK #1 **(Marvel)** Former Defender and coma-ward patient of the year for 1996 Nighthawk is back to fight...Daredevil? **$2.50**

SQUADRON SUPREME: NEW WORLD ORDER **(Marvel)** The Squadron Supreme returns home to discover a totalitarian regime has taken power. **$5.99**

THE STAR WARS HANDBOOK #1: X-WING ROGUE SQUADRON **(Dark Horse)** Learn all about the X-Wing Rogue Squadron, its pilots, their ships and the worlds they fly over. **$2.95**

STRANGE TALES #1 **(Marvel)** Pulp-hero Man-Thing battles the Silver Surfer, and Werewolf By Night discovers a dead man in his stanky, rat-filled lair. **$4.99**

SUNFIRE & BIG HERO 6 **(Marvel)** Japan's greatest heroes unite to form a team with the stupidest name ever, bar none. **$2.50**

TANGENT '98 BOOKS **(DC Comics)** It's another round of Tangent books featuring familiar names, but all-new characters. To redeem himself for past sins, a medieval Batman fights evildoers in a suit of armor in *The Batman* #1; the Justice League sends out its hit squad to kill a hero in *JLA* #1 and attempts to waste the Joker in *Joker's Wild* #1. In *Powergirl* #1, the newly activated Powergirl battles the Metal Men and Nightwing, while Harvey Dent becomes a Superman in *The Superman* #1. *The Trials of the Flash* #1 sees Plastic Man tangle with the female Flash, while Wonder Woman Wanda rockets from the planet Gotham to Earth in *Wonder Woman* #1. Shifty heroes in Night Force go on a rescue mission to free the Doom Patrol in *Nightwing: Night Force* #1, and the female Green Lantern's origins are played out in *Tales of the Green Lantern* #1. **$1.95 each**

TICK'S BIG GIANT SUMMER SPECIAL #1 **(New England Comics)** Summer camp sucks, but not half as much as the Tick's superhero "sidekick camp." **$3.50**

learned about each other as people. They met in costume and the next thing you know, they're in love. But how did that happen? So that's the main focus amid the big action-adventure story. That's the heartfelt thrust of this issue." By Mark Waid and Ron Garney. **$1.99**

DANGER GIRL #4

CLIFFHANGER/IMAGE Major Maxim is a bad-ass set on world domination. (Well, what else is he gonna do with a name like that?) Anyway, Maxim's plan just might hit a roadblock in the form of the spy agency Danger Girls, its ally Johnny Barracuda, and a mysterious kook. By J. Scott Campbell, Andy Hartnell and Alex Garner. **$2.50**

THE FLASH #131

DC COMICS "Black Flash," Part 3 (of 3). He's the Black Flash of death and whenever he appears a super-speedster buys the farm. Black's first victim was the real Flash's girlfriend, Linda Park, and now the fiend's got two pennies ready to put on the Flash's eyes. Ulp. "There's already been an incredible amount of speculation about [Black Flash]," Millar says. "The whole idea was to try and make the ultimate Flash story ever told. So to do that, we tried to create the ultimate villain. And the Black Flash is basically the personification of death for speedsters. Whenever a speedster dies, he doesn't go to the same place we go when we die—he goes into the Speed Force. The Black Flash is the entity that collects them." By Mark Millar, Pop Mhan and Chris Ivy. **$1.95**

GREEN LANTERN #103-#104

DC COMICS Green (money, that is) will get you great gobs of *Green Lantern* this month. In *GL* #103, old-school ring-slinger Hal Jordan reconnects with his former mates in the Justice League, who *might* just forgive him for going nuts and killing lots of other Green Lanterns. Two weeks later, check out *GL* #104, where Jordan and his archer pal Green Arrow are bound and tied to a nuclear bomb. By Ron Marz, Jeff Johnson, Bob Wiacek, Paul Pelletier and Terry Austin. **$1.95 each**

HELLBLAZER #129

VERTIGO/DC COMICS "Son of Man," Part 1 (of 5). Word to the wise—hey kids, leave them corpses alone! Fifteen years ago, John Constantine brought little Ronnie Cooper back from the dead. Now the little semi-dead punk is out to start a supernatural war and lay waste to his enemies. Constantine's gotta put things right, but first he's gonna have to deal with his friend Chas showing up at his door with a bloody shotgun and the cops on his tail. By Garth Ennis and John Higgins. **MR. $2.50**

HEPCATS #13

ANTARCTIC Horsey-faced chick Erica makes like some pants and splits from her abusive father, fleeing to the Big Easy (New Orleans, naturally). There, she hooks up with Madeleine, a dancer in the French Quarter. Hey, didn't we just see that on the series finale of "Ellen"? By Martin Wagner. **MR. $3.50**

HITMAN #30

DC COMICS "Tommy's Heroes," Part 2 (of 5). Hogan and his buddies attempt to tunnel under the prison camp, but then the microphone in the coffee pot is found and Schultz...d'oh! Wrong "Heroes." Anyhoo, Hitman Tommy Monaghan and pals are stuck in central Africa, with orders to destroy a rebel group's food supply. Unfortunately, the dictator Hitman's working for has hired some supergoons to kill innocent villagers and Monaghan. Apparently he's got *some* standards after all. By Garth Ennis, John McCrea and Garry Leach. **$2.25**

IRON MAN #8

MARVEL Wanna hear a secret? Get this, Tony Stark is Iron Man! Oh, you knew that already, huh? Well, thanks to a bug planted in Tony's office, somebody else knows it, too! Thing is, Tony can't even deal with that problem right now, 'cause he's busy workin' as a punching bag for Whiplash and Spymaster, since our hero's nowhere near his armor when the baddies strike. By Kurt Busiek, Sean Chen and Sean Parsons. **$1.99**

IRON MAN: THE IRON AGE #2 (OF 2)

MARVEL For Tony Stark, the Iron Age began when he forged a suit of metal and busted out of a Vietnamese hellhole. Learn what made Tony the drunk playboy he was and the hero he'd grow up to be. Oh yeah, you'll also find out exactly what happened when Tony's parents gave up that breathing thing. By Kurt Busiek, Patrick Zircher and Bob McLeod. **$5.99**

JLA #22

DC COMICS When the Conqueror Formerly Known as Starro (now known as Star Conqueror) begins to haunt the dreams of everyone on Earth, the JLA is powerless to stop the onslaught. But when you tamper with people's nocturnal visions, you've got to dance with Daniel, Lord of Dreams

(otherwise known as Sandman)—and let's just say it ain't going to be a waltz. By Grant Morrison, Howard Porter and John Dell. **$1.95**

JLA: YEAR ONE #9 (OF 12)

DC COMICS

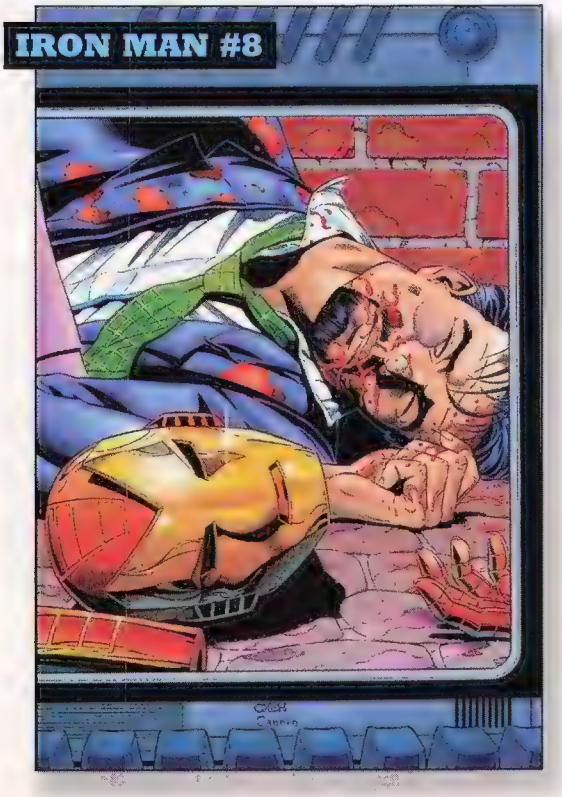
Before the Justice League of America hit the terrible twos, its members had to survive 12 months of pure, unbridled heck. Super-egos flared, the team began fighting among itself, and one of its members decided to take a powder right about the time the nefarious conglomerate Locus decided to unleash its master plan. It was almost enough to make the original Leaguers up and join Sovereign Seven. Almost. By Mark Waid, Brian Augustyn, Barry Kitson and Michael Bair. **$1.95**

JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA: THE NAIL #2 (OF 3)

DC COMICS Nails. You can hammer 'em, chew 'em or paint 'em. But for the JLA, the nail represents an alternate history—one *without* Superman. And now, with Robin and Batgirl dead, Lexcorp capturing and executing meta-humans, and an interstellar war raging between Apokolips and New Genesis, that future looks bleak indeed. By Alan Davis and Mark Farmer. **$4.95**

MAJOR BUMMER #14

DC COMICS Flash-forward to the future with beefy antihero Lou Martin (a.k.a. Major Bummer). Forty years from now, Martin's still less motivated than a tree sloth, and 41 years from now the Ultimate Terror appears to wreak, well, ultimate terror on Earth. So what's the Ultimate Terror? Try a time-twisting...ah, we'll let the writer tell you. But hey, forget about paying those taxes in 2039. By John Arcudi, Doug Mahnke and Tom Nguyen. "It's the middle part of a



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FIRST TIME OUT

ALPHA FLIGHT #14 (Marvel) It's time to play "Taps" for a dead Alpha Flight member. Sniff. **$1.99**

BATMAN BOOKS (DC Comics) Gotham City's in the toilet and Batman's got the blues in *Batman* #558. Then over in *Detective* #725, Batman and Nightwing take a tour of the earthquake-strewn wreckage. **$1.95 each**

THE DARKNESS #17 (Top Cow/Image) Half-dead baddie Magdelena attacks Jackie Estacado (The Darkness) with his own past. We recommend usin' a howitzer. **$2.50**

DEADPOOL #20 (Marvel) Crazed mercenary Deadpool takes Monty the psychic to Tijuana for some refined culture served in shot glasses with little worms at the bottom. **$1.99**

FANTASTIC FOUR #9 (Marvel) Someone's hunting the Human Torch. (Hopefully not Kraven.) And Spidey shows up, too. **$1.99**

GEN^{13} BOOKS (WildStorm/Image) Roxy gets lucky at the lizard races in steamy Boca Nora in *Gen^{13}* #31, while the Gen^{13} kids and Monkeyman and O'Brien battle their evil duplicates in *Gen^{13}/Monkeyman and O'Brien* #2.

JAY & SILENT BOB #2 (Oni Press) Smokemasters Jay and Silent Bob bypass the Louvre and head straight to the set of a porno flick. **MR $2.95**

LADY DEATH #7 (Chaos!) Can the mortal Hope (once the immortal Lady Death) unite all of Hell? **$2.95**

SPAWN #76 (Todd McFarlane/Image) Spawn loves Wanda. Wanda thinks Spawn's face looks like three pounds of ground chuck. Will true love conquer all? **$1.95**

SPIDER-MAN BOOKS (Marvel) The Rhino's on a rampage 'cause he can't remove his body armor in *Sensational Spider-Man* #31, and Norman Osborn, little Normie Osborn, Betty Brant and Peter Parker get stuck in an elevator during a terrorist attack in *Peter Parker: Spider-Man* #95. In *Spectacular Spider-Man* #261, the Goblins Green and Hob beat one another silly, and Spider-fans will get a double dose of *Amazing Spider-Man* with #438 and #439 this month. Spidey, under the control of the scum-tastic Synario, battles Daredevil in *Amazing* #438, and in #439 archeologists of the future try to figure out who Spider-Man was. **$1.99 each**

STAR WARS BOOKS (Dark Horse) Evil Admiral Thrawn sets a trap for the rebels and Luke confronts Jedi sleaze C'Baoth in *Star Wars: The Last Command* #6. Ex-Jedi Ulic Qel-Droma seeks redemption for his crimes in *Star Wars: Tales of the Jedi–The Redemption of Ulic Qel-Droma* #1 (whew!), and the Rogue Squadron must rescue Emperor Pestage from the Imperial Navy in *Star Wars: Rogue Squadron* #32. **$2.95 each**

SUPERMAN BOOKS (DC Comics) Reality gets a realignment, courtesy of the scoundrel Dominus in *Superman* #138, and Superman and Waverider attempt to make sense of Dominus' new reality in *Adventures of Superman* #561. That pesky Dominus is out to drive Superman crazy in *Action Comics* #748, and damn if it ain't Dominus all over again in *Superman: The Man of Steel* #83. **$1.95 each**

TALES OF THE DARKNESS #3 (Top Cow/Image) You say you want an inquisition? Try the Spanish one, when author Cervantes (*Don Quixote*) met Michelangelo Estacado, wielder of the Darkness. **$2.95**

WITCHBLADE #25 (Top Cow/Image) Watch Sara Pezzini whup Ian Nottingham's butt to save her friend Jake and possibly reclaim the Witchblade gauntlet in the process. **$2.95**

WOLVERINE #128 (Marvel) With this ring, we are confused. Wolverine and his villainous wife Viper find their previously unrevealed love interrupted by criminal groups HYDRA and the Hand. **$1.95**

three-part story," Arcudi says. "Everyone's facing this complete rupture of the time stream. Time itself has been rent asunder—I've always wanted to say that. And everybody's changed significantly, as do most people in 41 years time—except Lou." **$2.50**

PREACHER #41

VERTIGO/DC COMICS You know, if you took all the body parts that were lost in the "War in the Sun" storyline (wub) and stacked them up, you'd probably have a whole new *Preacher* character. Anyway, in this issue, one-eyed Jesse finds a furry companion, and a whole bunch of new and old characters make that crazy scene. By Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon. **MR $2.50**

ROBIN #57

DC COMICS Crime School is in, and Robin's all for cutting class. While the Cluemaster and his institute of evil hold seminars in all things felonious, Robin and his sometime-flame Spoiler go on their very first date (awww!) to a movie marathon, where they sit in the back row and...hey! You kids better get a motel room! By Chuck Dixon, Staz Johnson and Stan Woch. "The issue is called 'Date Night,' " Dixon says. "And Robin and Spoiler go on a date—not to fight crime or anything else, but to spend time together. And, of course, the challenge is to be able to go on a date in costume." **$1.95**

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE #65

VERTIGO/DC COMICS "The Goblin," Part 1 (of 4). With a name like Goblin, you just know he (or it) won't be giving generously to charitable institutions. Instead, this fiend appears in the dead of night to plague innocents and divest them of everything they hold sacred. Normally, the Golden Age Sandman would be right there to stop this evildoer, but he's being plagued by dreams which might take him out of the action. By Steven T. Seagle and Guy Davis. **MR $2.50**

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE #65

SAVAGE SHE-DRAGON #51

IMAGE Savage Dragon takes a sabbatical (or maybe just a dirt nap) in this issue, but, luckily, he's got a female counterpart to pinch-hit for him. She-Dragon steps to the plate, facing the God Squad, who've come to Earth to round up anyone who's the descendant of a god. By Erik Larsen, who says, "All I can say is, I don't have much to say. I mean, some of the characters that've been in the book, villains and stuff, we're gonna find out they're descendants of the gods. Really, what I'm trying to do in the immediate future here is to make this book real jump-onable. Getting the Dragon out of here for a little while will help facilitate that." By Erik Larsen. **$2.50**

STORMWATCH #9

WILDSTORM/IMAGE "Bleed," Part 3 (of 3). Aliens arrive to waste an alternate Earth and the members of StormWatch get to watch the whole show through a hole in the universe. Now they must ask themselves if they should try to stop the slaughter or go to McDonald's and try out those new "McRib" sandwiches. By Warren Ellis, Bryan Hitch and Paul Neary. **$2.50**

STRANGERS IN PARADISE #16

ABSTRACT STUDIO In this fantastical tale, Francine's a sword-swinging warrior princess, Katchoo is her bo-wielding trusty sidekick, David's a *faux* (and incompetent) Conan-type and Tambi's the evil mistress who wants to stick her sword into all of them. Battle on, Xen...uh, Francine! By Terry Moore. **$2.75**

SUPERMAN ADVENTURES #23

DC COMICS "War Games," Part 2 (of 2). Bad-boy Brainiac's moved into Superman's fortress *and* taken control of all the Earth's nukes. With Superman stuck in the Phantom Zone, the only one who can save the planet from becoming an irradiated turd is the super-stinker Livewire. Ah, Earth—we hardly knew ya. By Mark Millar, Aluir Amancio and Terry Austin. **$1.95**

SUPERMAN FOR ALL SEASONS #1 (OF 4)

DC COMICS Sayeth poet John Updike, "The car he drives to Supermarket. The way he takes is Superhigh. A Superlot is where he parks it. And Supersuds are what he buys." He's the Man of Steel, but before he became super he was farmboy Clark Kent—and this here's the story of how he learned to use his powers while trying to save the town of Smallville from a twister. Yee, doggies! By Jeph Loeb and Tim Sale. Loeb, our personal Superman for all seasons, speaketh thus: "I think more than anything we tried to stress how *uncomfortable* Clark is. He's awkward. He's trying to fit into a world he doesn't really understand and that's a world both of the city and a world where he has these gigantic powers. And he doesn't handle them very well, which is really interesting." **$4.95**

THOR #3

MARVEL Welcome, Thor, to the world of stubbed toes and migraine headaches. While the Thunder God's forced to share bodies with the mortal paramedic Jake Olson, the Inuit witch of the sea Sedna is out to make a love connection with Odin's favorite son. And, if you're good and eat your spinach, more secrets will be revealed about the shadowy character Marnot. "One of the things we're trying to do," Jurgens says, "is introduce new concepts and characters to *Thor*. Certainly in *Thor* we have seen other pantheons of gods in the past. What I want to do here is introduce another god, if you will, from another sort of pantheon—something extremely different than what we've seen before. So, we're touching on Sedna, the Inuit sea-witch." By Dan Jurgens, John Romita Jr. and Klaus Janson. **$1.99**

THUNDERBOLTS #18

THUNDERBOLTS #18

MARVEL Originally they were the Masters of Evil, who then became good guys (who were secretly bad guys) called the Thunderbolts. Yet after they were exposed, renounced their evil ways and stomped their old boss Citizen V, people began hating them even more. Which begs the question, will the Thunderbolts become the Masters of Evil again? And if they do, won't there be some sort o' copyright problem with the New (non-Thunderbolt) Masters of Evil? Hmm.... By Kurt Busiek, Mark Bagley and Scott Hanna. **$1.99**

UNCANNY X-MEN #359

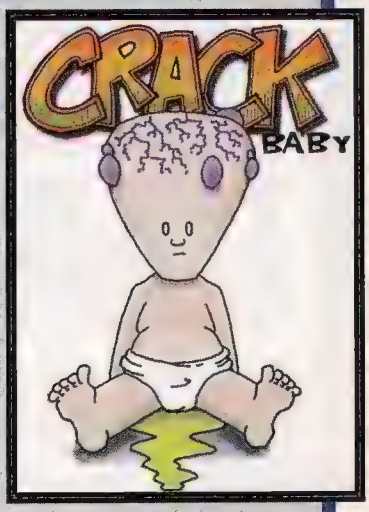
MARVEL Southern sweetie X-Man Rogue is out to do the nigh-impossible—have her powers removed. The Agee Institute is supposed to handle the procedure, but the organization's got a big secret and Rogue sure ain't gonna like it. By Steven T. Seagle, Chris Bachalo and Tim Townsend. **$1.99**

on the edge

OFF THE BEATEN PATH

CRACKBABY #1

PSYCHIC DONUT Once in a great while comes a comic that will touch the heart and stir the most noble feelings in its readers. *Crackbaby* is, most definitely, not that book. Join Crackbaby, Snuggles the Tapeworm, the Elvis Liver 2000 (a robot containing Elvis' liver) and Dr. Smiley the Abortion Clown as they do...well, some nasty stuff. By Rube Heckler, who says, "There's something in here that is going to offend everybody, but the problem is, you're going to laugh anyway. You're going to be offended and you're going to laugh—you can't help it." **MR $2.95**



X-MEN #79

MARVEL Get out the deep fryer and mint juleps—it's Southerners' month in the X-books. Corn-fritter-eatin' hero Cannonball leaves the X-Men, but not before taking on the monumental task of trying to make psycho-mutant Marrow into a bonafide X-Man. Trust us, Hercules had an easier task tryin' to tame the three-headed hound of hell Cerberus. By Joe Kelly, German Garcia and Art Thibert. **$1.99**

YOUNG JUSTICE #1

DC COMICS Sniff? Sniff? Smell that? That's teen spirit (or maybe Clearisil). Young super-turks Impulse, Superboy and Robin have joined forces to fight crime. Known as Young Justice, these heroes are faced with the daunting problem of a mysterious vehicle, one that takes the super-kids on one of those wacky adventures to who-knows-where. Teen dream David says, "Essentially, they find a super-cycle, which of course has its origins in New Genesis. In order to actually use the super-cycle, they have to get past this issue's token guest villainess—the Mighty Endowed." And, Peter David adds, "Lots of people should buy this book so that I will be happy." By Peter David, Todd Nauck and Lary Stucker. **$2.50**

ZOT! BOOK THREE

KITCHEN SINK Teen alien hero Zot, sadly, will *not* be joining Young Justice. He will, however, have four story arcs reprinted (from *Zot!* #16 and #21-#27) in this 176-page softcover book. Zot fights the De-Evolutionary Hordes, battles the über-criminal The Blotch, tangles with the interstellar assassin 9Jack9, and is most definitely not invited to a supervillain wrap party. By Scott McCloud. **$19.95**

REPORT card

COMIC BOOK REVIEWS

BY *WIZARD* EDITORS BRIAN CUNNINGHAM, ANDREW KARDON AND MIKE SEARLE

THE UNCANNY X-MEN

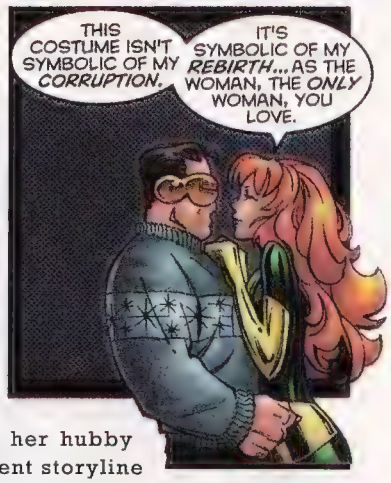
'X' marks the spot

ISSUES REVIEWED: #351–#356
GENRE: Superhero action/adventure
PUBLISHER: Marvel Comics
CREATIVE TEAM: Steve Seagle, Chris Bachalo and Tim Townsend
PRICE/FREQUENCY: $1.99/Monthly

What You Need to Know: Children of the atom, the X-Men are mutants, *homo superior*, and use their superpowers for the betterment of humankind which, ironically, hates and fears them. The current roster includes (...deep breath...) Angel, Beast, Bishop, Cannonball, Cyclops, Iceman, Joseph, Maggott, Marrow, Phoenix, Psylocke, Cecilia Reyes, Rogue, Storm and Wolverine.

The Good: The storytelling is the most solid it's been in years. *Uncanny X-Men* tells stories that not only *end* (something the series has had difficulty with for over 15 years), but have powerful framing sequences, foreshadowing scenes, intriguing metaphors, cliffhangers and, perhaps most importantly, tales that focus on the characters rather than on characters revolving around the Next Big X-Crossover.

Speaking of characters, for the most part we're digging them. Rogue is finally dealing with an overwhelming need for human touch, which may shatter her relationship with the rest of the team. Jean Grey has adopted the old Phoenix costume and namesake of her deceased cosmic dopplegänger (which wound up becoming Dark Phoenix, obliterating the inhabitants of an entire alien solar system way back in *Uncanny* #135) and is exhibiting a massive increase in power—causing alarm for her hubby Cyclops. The current storyline beginning in #356 might be the best one yet, focusing solely on the five original X-Men as they bond together in Alaska—these guys finally feel like friends again and, more importantly, people.

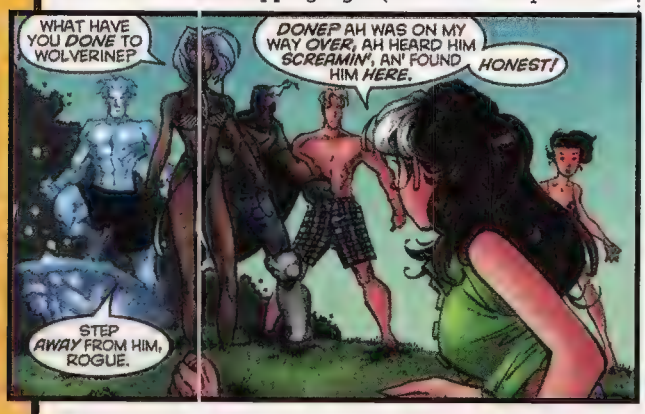


All this storytelling is augmented by the quirky-yet-evocative artwork. It may be a different-looking X-book, but it takes us from faithful renderings (an Asian Jubilee, a short Wolverine) to the fantastic (Rogue's eerie dream sequence in #353 where she sucks up Wolverine's powers).

The Bad: There are way too many characters in the X-Men lineup (15 total). Cecilia Reyes has an issue dedicated to her (#351), then we don't see her again for five issues. In the issues we read, Psylocke's only in six panels (#353) and other characters like Bishop, Cannonball, Maggott and Marrow are severely shortchanged. We get no feel for them as characters, and new readers will be clueless as to who they are or what their powers are.

The Buzz: Our criticism of too many characters will be addressed in this August's big "Children of the Atom" X-crossover, as the team's lineup will be pared down to a manageable seven members (with an eighth rounding it off in September).

The Skinny: This is the best run of X-Men books we've read in a long while. The stories are cohesive—with foreshadowing, good subplots and closure—and some of our favorite characters like Cyclops, Phoenix and Rogue are back as *real* characters. With a few lineup improvements, this book is primed for a higher grade. ■



The Jean Grey/Phoenix subplot adds a nice amount of tension to the team.

This bunch comprises less than half of the team. At 15 members, there are just too many X-Men to keep track of.

THE GRADE: B

THE FLASH

Speedy readin'

ISSUES REVIEWED: #130–#138
GENRE: Superhero action/adventure
PUBLISHER: DC Comics
CREATIVE TEAM: Grant Morrison, Mark Millar, Paul Ryan, Ron Wagner and John Nyberg
PRICE/FREQUENCY: $1.95/Monthly

What You Need to Know: The Flash (a.k.a. Wally West) is the fastest man alive. By tapping into the "Speed Force," he can add speed to other speedsters or even increase his own already insane speed.

The Good: *Flash* hooks you like no other comic series. We dare readers to crack open an issue and not be hooked by these plots. In ish #130, Flash finds his own dead body with a note saying he has 60 minutes to solve his murder. Flash comes home to see his girlfriend walking and talking backwards in time (#132-#133), and if he doesn't act fast, she'll "rewind" quicker and quicker until she disappears forever.

If that isn't enough, this book's got some of the best cliffhangers in the biz. Whether it's Flash lying on the ground with two severely broken legs (#130), or a severely defeated G-Force announcing that Flash must win the ultimate race or Earth dies (#135), each issue just leaves you begging for more.

Adding to this is a heavy infusion of science. There's everything from Flash simply turning off the lights so Mirror Master can't use his mirror- and light-based powers, to the Flash using Speed Force energy to create his costume (#131).

And even with its rapid pacing, *Flash* still has enough time for characterization. Issue #134 actually makes you care about the old "Grampa Flash," Jay Garrick, simply by spending a day with him and his wife on their 50th wedding anniversary.

The Bad: As cool as it is, Flash occasionally gets a bit too hokey. There's the whole "haunted" costume story arc (#130-#132), Flash's imaginary childhood radio friend (who's actually a real creature from a planet of crackly li'l critters) and the Flash running through a prism, turning himself into seven different-colored Flashes (#133). Cool stories? Sure. But they'd be a whole lot cooler without the cheeseball aspects.

At times, *Flash* is a bit too fast for its own good. During the Mirror Master storyline (#133), things got very confusing very quickly. Flash was apparently trapped in a mirror world fighting against another version of himself...but things never slowed down enough for readers to follow what was going on. And don't even get us started on #130's time-traveling elements where the Flash went back in time to save his own life. We're still scratching our heads at exactly what happened

The Buzz: Thanks to Grant Morrison's popularity with *JLA*, Flash has raced up the sales charts. With Mark Waid and Brian Augustyn returning to the title in August, expect this book to be on everyone's list.

The Skinny: With some neat plots, a dose of scientific reality and great cliffhangers, *Flash* just keeps us coming back for more. Let's hope that when Waid and Augustyn return, they can keep up the pace. ■

Flash *can certainly hook you with its dramatic cliffhangers.*

Krakkl is Wally's imaginary friend...but turns out to be real...? This sums up how hokey Flash *can get.*

THE GRADE: B+

MAGE: THE HERO DEFINED

Hocus Pocus Slowcus

ISSUES REVIEWED: #0-#7
GENRE: Fantasy action/adventure
PUBLISHER: Image Comics
CREATOR: Matt Wagner
PRICE/FREQUENCY: $2.50/Monthly

What You Need to Know: The *Hero Defined* is the second series of a *Mage* trilogy. It stars Kevin Matchstick, a modern-day incarnation of King Arthur, who roams the Earth trying to rid the world of "nasties" (demons, goblins, trolls, etc.) with his trusty enchanted baseball bat. Joining him are the fast-footed Joe Phat and the Herculean Kirby Hero..

The Good: This series' concept is way cool! It takes the attitudes and abilities of mythical heroes and throws them into today's society. Kevin's bat represents the sword, Excalibur. Kirby, with his quest to complete 12 "labors," is a modern-day Hercules. Joe (a.k.a. The Coyote) is a '90s version of Hiawatha. The Dragonslayer is Siegfried. As more and more heroes show up, it's a lot of fun guessing who they represent.

While *Mage* is set in today's world, the fantasy aspects stay true to their roots. There's Gretch's dwarf stone collection (dwarf eyes eventually turn into precious gems) in issue #3, the witch called Isis (yep, no guessing games here) casts a homing hex on a minibus (#4) and a riddle-spewing troll that lives under a bridge (#1).

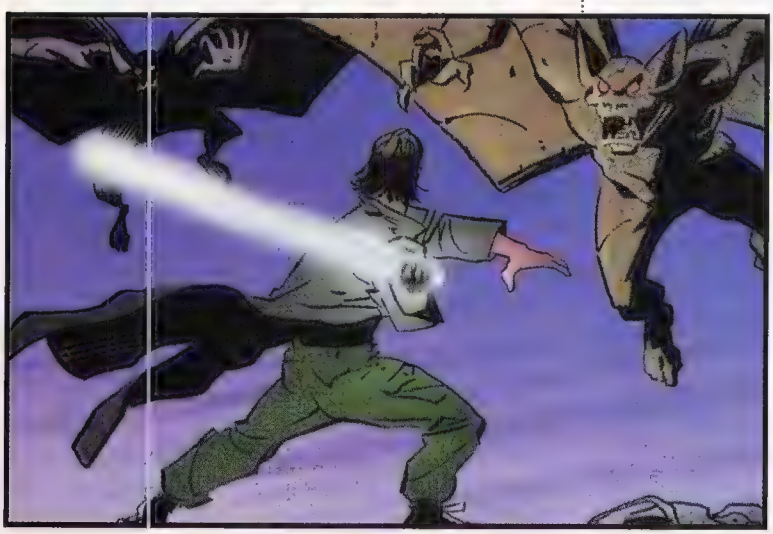
The collection of heroes gathering up North for some sort of ensuing conflict keeps you wondering what's up. And the fact that each hero has some emblem on his clothing (Kirby's got a lion head, Joe has a thin lighting bolt and Bear-Wulf has a Grendel head) appeals to the superhero fan in us.

As for the art, Matt Wagner's style may seem simple and sometimes sketchy, but it fits with the series and gives the colorist lots of room to play with. Not to mention, the book's action sequences are top-notch.

The Bad: *Maaaaaage* mooooves tooooo slowwwwwwlllllllyy. It's taken seven issues just to gather all the heroes in one place, and have the villain *finally* create his monstrous weapon. Sure, things look like they are just about to take off, but we were a little turned off by the series' relative lack of direction. A casual reader probably would've dropped the book by now.

The Buzz: Despite *Mage*'s decade-plus layoff (the first series ended in 1986), fans are getting jiggy with Kevin's new adventures and sales are climbing steadily. (Issues #1-#4 were recently collected into a trade paperback.)

The Skinny: While we really dig the characters and concept of this series, the story's taking *way* too long to find its way. Perhaps when it's all done and read in one sitting, it'll go down a lot smoother. But in monthly installments, it loses a lot of its magic. ■



Mage *has taken a whole seven issues to get moving in any direction.*

Taking mythical heroes fighting monsters in a modern world is cool. Kevin Matchstick (shown here) represents King Arthur, and his bat is Excalibur.

THE GRADE: B+

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CHRONOS

Give it time

ISSUES REVIEWED: #1-#5
GENRE: Superhero action/adventure
PUBLISHER: DC Comics
CREATIVE TEAM: John Francis Moore, Paul Guinan and Steve Leialoha
PRICE/FREQUENCY: $2.50/Monthly

What You Need to Know: Seeking personal gain, Walker Gabriel creates a high-tech suit (developed from the notes of the original Chronos, a villain named David Clinton) which can stop time. Later, through a freak accident, the suit is bathed in tachyon radiation which allows Walker to travel through time at will.

The Good: With a time-traveling series, it's essential that the settings be good—and that's what you get with *Chronos*. Well-researched and ripe with historical detail, each issue sucks you into the time period Walker is experiencing, from Smallville of 1873 (issue #2) to Florence, Italy during the Renaissance (#3). Plus, each issue has a little bit of DC history thrown in for kicks, such as Clark Kent's ancestors in issue #2 and a cameo by Jason Blood in issue #3.

The series has interesting moments. The gripping climax of the series' first storyline sees Walker make the wrong choice, dooming the world; he's then forced to launch a last-second time-traveling gambit to try to fix his dreadful mistake (#4). And the subplot with the original Chronos facing impending death is intriguing—he's gradually fading from existence because his frequent time-travel has left his body misaligned with the present.

Walker is a likable character. Sure, he jumps around time robbing for his own gain, but he's viewed in an sympathetic light—he's a guy dealing with tough times who tries to make the right choices, even with all these wild events happening around him.

The Bad: The series might have neat scenes, but the stories surrounding those moments have their problems.

There are confusing time loops and illogical paradoxes. With Walker slipping in and out of time periods and cameos by different versions of his future self, *Chronos* has readers working much harder than they should to follow a fairly simple plot.

Also, despite Walker and David, there's not enough time devoted to the rest of the supporting cast. Walker runs into a time-jumping caravan called the Goodfellow Troupe (#3), but we don't get much on their perceptions, feelings, motivations—as a result they come across flat, forced and lifeless. Throw into the mix the main villain Vyronis, who's about as predictable and cliché as they come with his "master of time" scheme, and you've got immediate turn-off.

The bland, simplistic and sometimes confusing artwork only clouds matters. Is that Walker's present or future self we're seeing? Is the same lady we met in 15th century Italy the one we're talking to in future Chronopolis? We dunno.

The Buzz: Not much, though *Chronos* is a *Starman*-like "generational" type of book that may slowly build some buzz.

The Skinny: *Chronos* is a book ripe with untapped potential. With less weird paradoxes, more character build-up and clearer art, it could blossom nicely. (W)

The original Chronos fading in and out of time is a neat touch to this series.

Yeesh, didn't we see this scene in "Timecop" or something?

THE GRADE: C

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For a list of winners, available after September 11, 1998, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: 'Darkstalkers' Revenge' Winners List, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

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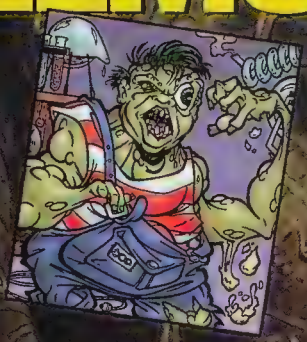

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MANGA FORCE

'Star Wars' goes Japanese in July

Big eyes, meet bigger blasters.

Forget about "a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away." *Star Wars: A New Hope—Manga* is here now, adapting into manga style the greatest in-your-face space opera of all time. Debuting in July, Dark Horse Comics' four-issue *Star Wars* packs the explosive force of a fully operational Death Star, with possibly enough thrills to power an X-Wing fighter.

Last year, manga artist Tamaki Hisao (*Breaker!*) produced a series of Star Wars manga for Japanese publisher Mediaworks based on the "Special Edition" release of the "Star Wars" trilogy. Lucasfilm showed the results to Dark Horse, and the rest, as they say, is history. "Manga and 'Star Wars' are a natural combo," Dave Land, editor of the new series, says. "We were impressed. [Hisao's] art looked fantastic, so we decided to go for it."

And indeed, the manga/Star Wars combo works so well together it's kinda frightening. Cover artist Adam Warren (*Dirty Pair*, *Bubblegum Crisis*) agrees. "It's a potent combination—great space opera storytelling coupled with the high-action speed motif of the manga idiom. [Hisao] really captures the excitement and adventure aspects of 'Star Wars.' "

Hisao's art meshes seamlessly with Star Wars tech, weaponry and character designs. But his adaptation isn't slavish. Not only does he give the characters the manga "big eyes-lotsa speed lines" treatment—as Warren puts it—but he also brings his own style and creativity to the project. While fans need not fear exposure to a super-deformed Darth Vader, Hisao does manage to impart his own take on the appearance of some of the main characters. "Vader looks much as he did in some of the original [Ralph] McQuarrie concept paintings," Warren says. "[Although] his helmet is more slit-eyed and swept back." Likewise, Chewbacca takes on a much more canine appearance than his movie counterpart.

Leia doesn't escape modification, either. Her trademark honey-bun hairdo got no respect in the "Star Wars: Special Edition" movie poster, and Hisao does what he can to de-emphasize it as well. That wacky hairstyle is nearly impossible to do in a manga style anyway, according to Warren. "I tried to draw it manga-style for a project now long-defunct, and found it just wasn't working." Hisao gets over the problem by giving Leia bangs and long hair in the back.

FORCE, NOT FARCE My, what big eyes you have, Luke Skywalker!

Where Hisao really comes into his own is in depicting the lightsaber duel between Vader and Obi-wan Kenobi. While the movie lightsaber duels were patterned after Golden Age Hollywood swashbuckling flicks (Lucas used the same fight choreographer who once coached Errol Flynn), Hisao's duels have a much more Eastern flair. "Hisao goes for more of a kendo-type fight sequence," Warren says, "very dynamic and exciting, more like something out of the samurai movie genre." Which is kind of ironic, really, seeing Hisao pull Kenobi and Vader back into the camp of famed filmmaker Akira Kurosawa—where Lucas originally drew inspiration for them in the first place.

The biggest downside to the series is the dialogue. Or rather, being exposed to the dialogue for the 10 billionth time; as cool as the new art is, the wording is lifted directly from the "Special Edition" scripts. Okay, that's

BY PAUL SUDLOW

ANIMEPICK

ANIME FILM OF THE MONTH

SILENT SERVICE

(U.S. Manga Corps, 100 minutes each, $24.95/$29.95, dubbed/subtitled)

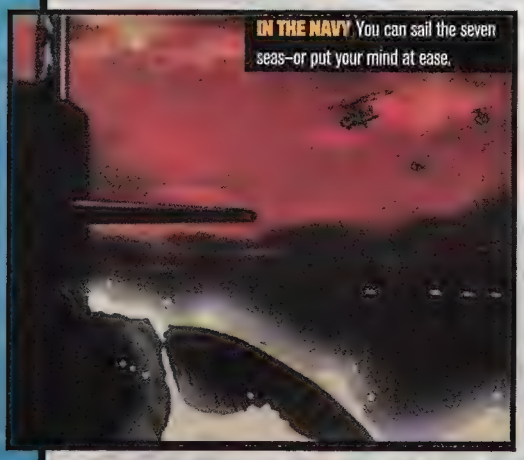
The *Seabat*, covertly developed by the United States and Japan, officially doesn't exist. Nominally attached to the U.S. 7th Fleet—but really Japan's first nuclear sub—it is manned by an all-Japanese crew including the brilliant Captain Kaieda, Japan's top skipper. It's the most advanced sub in the world.

It's also just gone rogue. Declaring *Seabat* the independent nation state Yamato, Kaieda touches off a desperate hunt by the U.S. and Japanese fleets to locate the sub at all costs.

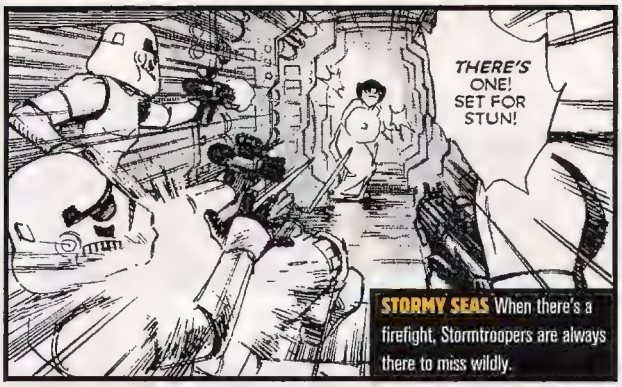
Part Tom Clancy techno-thriller and part "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea," "Silent Service" ("Chinmoku no Kantai") ranges from the high seas of the Pacific to the back rooms of Japan and the United States as the two nations prepare for war. It's a taut military thriller loaded with sea battles and political skullduggery.

Disappointingly, the antagonists are flimsy, strawman "bad" guys rather than principled men with opposing ideologies. By pondering big issues like the future of U.S.-Japanese relations, "Silent Service" tries to be more than a mere action adventure but, by falling back on stock pulp villains, fails. Still, viewed as a simple action film, "Silent Service" is great fun. Where else can one watch a surfaced nuclear sub play chicken with an aircraft carrier?

"Silent Service" is based on a hugely popular manga of the same name by Kaiji Kawaguchi. It ran more than 7,000 pages, sold 28 million copies, and made big waves in Japanese government a few years ago. For more info on the manga and its impact on Japanese society, check out Frederik Schodt's essay in *Dreamland Japan* (pages 164–168).



IN THE NAVY You can sail the seven seas–or put your mind at ease.



STORMY SEAS When there's a firefight, Stormtroopers are always there to miss wildly.

probably a dream come true for the translator, but for everyone else...well, doesn't everyone pretty much know every line by heart? Reading through it all again, word for word, can get a bit dull. Thankfully, Hisao slips a few new scenes into the mix when readers least expect it. How about a few panels depicting the Jawa sandcrawler massacre? That'll wake anyone up!

The Dark Horse editions feature covers by Adam Warren rather than Hisao. Why? Apparently, the original two paintings Hisao did for the Japanese editions were done in a realistic style. "That's common in some manga," Warren says. "Dark Horse wanted a manga-style cover to go with the comics, so they asked me if I'd be interested. I've been a "Star Wars" fan since I was a wee lad, so of course I said 'yes.'"

Wizard also was curious to see which way the Japanese came down on the great Greedo-Han Solo shoot-out controversy. Who shoots first in the manga version? "Well, it's kinda ambiguous, really," says Land. "It looks like Han gets the first shot, but there's a blaster bolt glancing off the wall next to him, so it's hard to tell."

If the *A Hew Hope* series sells well, look for more Star Wars manga to come down the pike. Mediaworks also did manga versions of "The Empire Strikes Back" and "Return of the Jedi," according to Land, so the door is definitely open on doing more manga-style Star Wars projects. Even original manga Star Wars comics are a possibility, albeit a remote one, Land says. "Basically, this project opens new doors on a number of levels. [For example,] we've been trying to get Adam Warren approved as a Star Wars artist for a while, but Lucasfilm didn't feel his manga style was a good match for Star Wars. Now, he's in." In other words, stay tuned.

When asked if he'd be interested in working on some original Star Wars manga stories, Warren is coy. "Well, I'm not entirely averse to the idea," he admits.

InQuest associate editor Paul Sudlow has been active in the manga and anime scene for more than 13 years. He still doesn't have a Web page, though.

F.Y.I.

INFO

Star Wars: A New Hope–Manga is a four-part series kicking off this month with issue #1. Each 96-page issue of the black and white series by Tamaki Hisao features cover art by Adam Warren, with lettering and touch-up courtesy of Tom Orzechowski (*Ghost in the Shell, Spawn*). Retail price for each issue is $9.95.

If the series does well, a graphic novel edition probably will follow. There are no plans to colorize the graphic novel edition of the manga, though editor Dave Land believes the results would be stunning. "We didn't have the color art in time to send out to distributors, so we colorized some of the interior art, with fantastic results."

MANGAPICKS

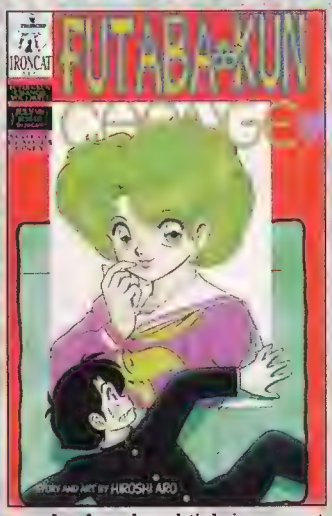
MUST-READ JAPANESE COMICS SHIPPING IN JULY

CHIBI-POP MANGA #1

CHIBI-POP MANGA

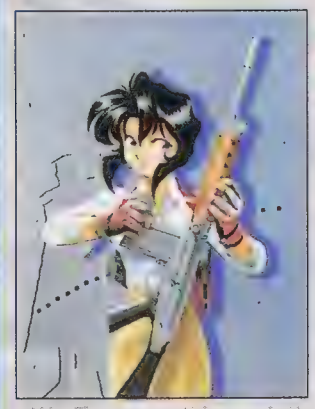
Chibi-Pop Manga is a new anthology magazine showcasing the work of up-and-coming artists. Each issue presents 15 pages of manga by the cover artist of the month, plus a column where readers can ask pros questions, presumably such as: "Do you ink with a G-pen or a Q-tip?" There's also a recurring manga featuring Tomiko, the tomboy ESPer schoolgirl who lives in an amusement park. The mag's got a cute girl with a gun on the cover. How can anyone say no to it? For mature readers.

FUTABA-KUN CHANGE! #1



STUDIO IRONCAT

The Shimeru clan suffers under an unusual family curse: upon reaching puberty, its members change sex when they experience powerful emotions. Unfortunately, nobody remembered to tell young Futaba Shimeru about it; certainly not Futana, possibly the most whack-job big sister ever to walk the planet! Sure, the gender-bender shtick is a one-trick pony, but comedy artist Hiroshi Aro rides that pony places Rumiko Takahashi (*Ranma 1/2, Inu-Yasha*) never went! For mature readers.



GUNSMITH CATS: BAD TRIP #2

DARK HORSE COMICS

Trapped in Goldie's hideout, bounty hunter Rally does her best to fend off the hypnotic effects of Goldie's high-powered designer drug Kerosine. While sidekick Minnie-May turns Chinatown upside down in search of an old medicine woman who might have some answers, Rally's pal Misty discovers Goldie's fiendish plot: to turn Rally into a drugged-up assassin set on killing her police detective buddy Role Coleman. For mature readers.

INU-YASHA VOL. 2 GRAPHIC NOVEL

VIZ COMICS

Back in the present after adventuring with the dog-demon Inu-Yasha, Japanese schoolgirl Kagome has no desire to return to the enchanted world of feudal Japan. But when a demon woman with killer hair starts kicking up a storm in the past, Kagome has no choice but to come to Inu-Yasha's aid. Then things progress from bad to worse when Inu-Yasha's bad-to-the-bone half-brother Sesshomaru starts running around with their deceased father's legendary sword, and it's up to Inu-Yasha and Kagome to stop him.

OH MY GODDESS!: FALLEN ANGEL

DARK HORSE COMICS

In this one-shot story by Kosuke Fujishima, Keiichi gets a love letter from an admirer. Unfortunately, he's too kind-hearted to discourage the determined lass—even when she turns out to be an amateur exorcist bent on ridding him of such evil spirits as Belldandy! Of course, being just an amateur exorcist, her results occasionally vary from her expectations, but what else is new in Japan's wackiest household?

MR. MONSTER VS. GORZILLA

IMAGE COMICS

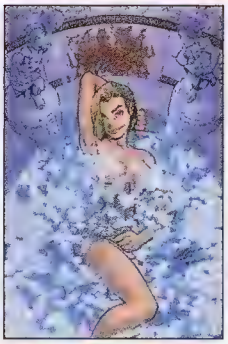
The big guy (girl?) may be stompin' all over rainy New York City this summer, but Image is riding to the rescue with this Godzilla-sized, uh, Godzilla parody drawn in that darn-popular manga style. Watch as Mr. Monster, the mighty veteran monster slayer, takes on the big green Gorzilla in his first Image appearance. Mr. Monster's been kicking beastie butt since 1984, so he just might know what's he's doing. Right. Well, anyway, it's the only comic on this list in color. That's gotta count for something!

PLASTIC LITTLE: CAPTAIN'S LOG TRADE PAPERBACK

CPM COMICS

If you missed the first run of Satoshi Urushihara's beautiful series, CPM has put issues #1-#5 under one cover for your shopping convenience. Starting where the video left off, *Captain's Log* follows the adventures of Captain Tita and the crew of the *Cha Cha Maru*. Find out more than you ever wanted to know about Balboa, Mei Lin and the rest of the gang in 160 pages of manga madness. For mature readers.

DYNAMIC FORCES'



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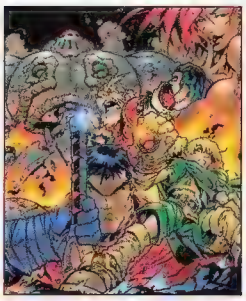

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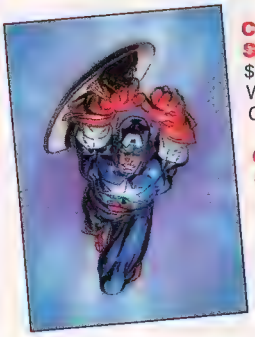

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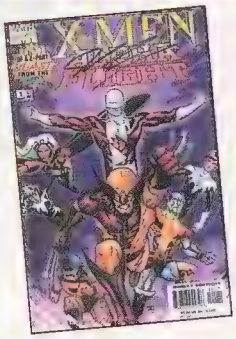

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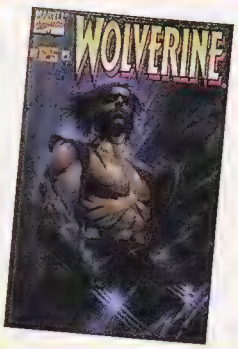

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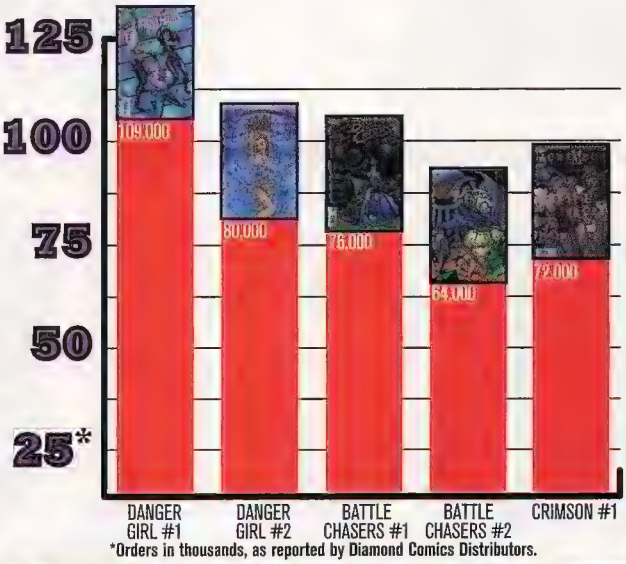
COMIC MARKET NEWS AND SUCH by Lars Pearson

MARKET WATCH

BATTLE CHASERS CHARGE!

Madureira's title leads new Cliffhanger line



CLIFF CLIMBERS *Battle Chasers*, ordered in quantities much less than *Danger Girl*, has been the secondary market hit of the Cliffhanger imprint.

Gird your loins for battle! The chase for *Battle Chasers* is on!

The latest rage on the back-issue market, *Battle Chasers* looked like a no-brainer, with story and pencils by former *Uncanny X-Men* star Joe Madureira.

But few predicted Joe Mad's *true* drawing power or the fans' insane desire to lay hands on the sword-and-sorcery-style *Battle Chasers*. Issue #1 was under-ordered and sold out instantly, going for up to *double* cover price or more a mere one day after release. Supply still hasn't met demand, and *Battle Chasers* #2, ordered in quantities 15 percent less than #1, looks poised to go supernova also.

Fellow Cliffhanger titles *Danger Girl* and *Crimson* also are selling well, but may stall out, since supply is meeting demand. And for those *Battle Chasers* fanatics out there, there are already several versions of #1 to look for:

• **Common cover**—By Madureira, with the logo on the *back* cover.

• **Variant cover**—Released in a 1:4 ratio, with a cover by *WildC.A.T.s* artist Travis Charest.

• **"Butt" cover**—Drawn by Madureira, this has the *Chasers* logo prominently displayed on character Red Monika's...rear. It's exclusive to catalog retailer Another Universe.

• **Chromium cover**—Limited to 5,000 copies and featuring a Chromium version of the common cover, this is easily the most expensive and volatile *Battle Chasers* comic.

• **Second print**—Has another Madureira cover, featuring a close-up of Gully and her gauntlets.

Completists shouldn't forget the anthology magazine *Frank Frazetta Fantasy Illustrated* #2, which has an original 10-page Battle Chasers story. Good luck getting 'em if you're looking to collect all of these—you're braver than most.

PREVIEW MANIA

If you're buying the movie ticket, should you pay for the preview?

Preview comics used to be just that—a few teaser pages that got junked when the real deal came out. But, more and more, previews are sold for bigger bucks than actual, full-blown comics. Nonetheless, for every fan who loves them, there's another one who doesn't.

"Previews are cool, but a pain in the ass when you *must* have them," said comic buyer Nathaniel Ubben of Seattle. "Doing original stories in previews is great, but if it becomes a full issue, then do it as a full issue."

Fan frustration might grow, as additional previews become more than just bin-cheese. Some notables to watch include:

• ***Preacher Retailer Preview* (Vertigo/DC)**—This comic sparked the back-issue preview boom. Nobody knew how high *Preacher* would eventually soar, so most retailers chucked their copies. Controversy that this might be Jesse Custer's first appearance (it isn't, since previews don't "count"),

blew the book into the $70 range.

• ***The Final Night Preview* (DC)**—This trailer for DC's 1996 crossover had an original, six-page story that destroyed ex-Titan Starfire's homeworld and offed her sister, the villainous Blackfire. It was reprinted in *The Final Night* trade paperback, but completists want the original, since this series also killed off former Green Lantern Hal Jordan.

• ***StormWatch* and *Gen[13] Previews* (WildStorm/Image)**—As part of the polybagged "Voyager Pack" versions of *Divine Right* #1 and *StormWatch* #1, respectively, these had original eight-page stories. There are no plans to reprint them.

• ***Danger Girl Preview* (Cliffhanger/Image)**—An original story, Voyager-packed with *Gen[13]* #25, due for reprinting in trade paperback in August.

•***Agent America Preview* (Awesome)** —After his dismissal from *Captain America*, creator Rob Liefeld unveiled his own patriotic hero, Agent America. But Marvel Comics contended that Agent looked too much like Cap and sued to stop publication. Liefeld later

NOW, VOYAGER Released as part of a Wildstorm "Voyager Pack," the Gen[13] preview is hot.

secured rights to the pre-existing Fighting American character and Agent was scrapped, but this comic still has history.

• ***Glory (vol. 2) Preview* (Awesome)**—Awesome Entertainment pumped out this

PHOTOS: BUSIEK, DAVID, ADAM KUBERT, LEE, MADUREIRA, BUSS, SEAGLE, TURNER, WAID, Z. BY PAUL SCHRADER; MORRISON BY BOB MARTIN; LARSEN BY AL DITERLIZZI; ANDY KUBERT BY C. BLANKENSHIRA; BACHALO COURTESY OF MARVEL COMICS; PÉREZ BY BRIAN SMITH; CHURCHILL PHOTO COURTESY IAN CHURCHILL

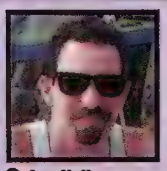
TOP 10 CREATORS

FAN FAVORITES

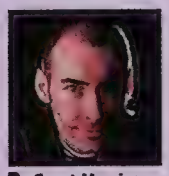
These are the creators the fans crave. Creators whose name on a cover sells the book. *Wizard's* Top Ten Creators lists are derived from a nationwide retailer survey. Artists include pencilers and painters.

WRITERS

1. Kurt Busiek
Astro City, Avengers



2. Joe Kelly
Deadpool, X-Men



3. Grant Morrison
JLA, The Invisibles

4. Mark Waid
Captain America, JLA: Year One

5. Garth Ennis
Preacher, Hitman

6. Steven T. Seagle
Uncanny X-Men, Alpha Flight

7. Peter David
Supergirl

8. Matt Wagner
Mage: The Hero Defined

9. Christina Z.
Witchblade

10. Erik Larsen
Savage Dragon, upcoming: *Aquaman*

ARTISTS

1. Joe Madureira
Battle Chasers

2. Michael Turner
Fathom

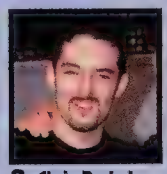
3. Jim Lee
Divine Right

4. J. Scott Campbell
Danger Girl

5. Alex Ross
upcoming: *Superman: P. on E.*

6. Andy Kubert
Captain America

7. Adam Kubert
upcoming: *X-Men*



8. Chris Bachalo
Uncanny X-Men

9. George Pérez
Avengers

10. Ian Churchill
The Coven

BURIED TREASURE

KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR THIS

TALES OF THE TEEN TITANS #44

Everyone's favorite sidekick is all grown up. As Robin, Dick Grayson was Batman's little buddy in short pants. But as Nightwing, his book is selling almost as well as big brother *Batman*. And it's *Tales of the Teen Titans* #44—part of the famed "Judas Contract" storyline—where Grayson first assumes the Nightwing identity.

New readers are turning on to *Nightwing* every month and 14 years of time have made a lot of *TotTT* copies, shall we say...less than mint. Given a little more time, *Nightwing* could kick *Batman* to the side and this book could spread its wings and fly. ■ LP

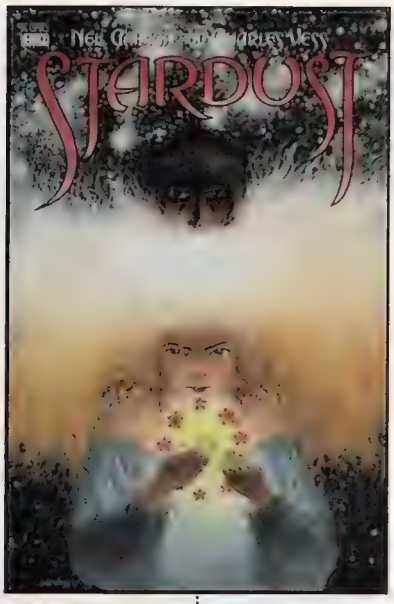
teaser by Alan Moore (*Supreme*) and Brandon Peterson (*Arcanum*), then saw *Glory* fall when a financial backer scaled back funding. The preview is now the title's only published work.

XENA: SALES WARRIOR

She's the most quiet comic warrior out there.

Even as Xena rides the airwaves as TV's favorite warrior princess, the comics from publisher Topps are staging a more subtle battle. Though the books continue to sell well, you're unlikely to hear much hype, since many of the buyers are Xena fans rather than traditional comic geeks.

Nonetheless, *Xena* constantly ranks in the Top 100, outselling a fair chunk of mainstream superhero titles. As a result, you really don't want to ignore Xena's first appearances in *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* #3-#5, nor her first mini-series, since those will be the books that rise the quickest.



HAPPY MAGIC PIXIES With happy magic pixie dust.

STARDUST WORKS ITS MAGIC

Neil Gaiman could write bran muffin recipes and they'd still sell.

Stardust, a four-issue DC/Vertigo mini-series from Gaiman and his occasional *Sandman* collaborator, artist Charles Vess, is moving up in price against all odds.

Most mini-series crash like lead balloons on the secondary market, and at $5.95 a copy, *Stardust* was already pricey. Add to that the book's non-comic, text-and-spot-art format, and you'd think *Stardust* would die a quick death.

But Gaiman has a huge non-comics readership, having endeared himself to thousands through novels such as "Good Omens." Many non-comics Gaiman faithful showed up, and *Stardust* is now living large in the back-issue market.

Lars Pearson, Wizard's glandless Price Guide director, really knows what he's talking about most of the time.

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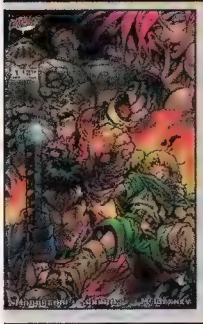
TOP 10 comics

***Wizard*, by staying in touch with hundreds of retailers throughout the country, keeps a close eye on the country's hottest back issues. These are the books ringing the registers this month...**

1 BATTLE CHASERS #1



WRITERS: J. Madureira and M. Sharrieff
ARTISTS: J. Madureira and T. McWeeney

Ladies and gentlemen, we have a new Top 10 champeen. Why *Battle Chasers*? Here's three big reasons: It's a fantasy book, and fantasy's going great guns in the entertainment world. Think "Xena," folks. Second, this book was severely under-ordered, spelling scarcity with a capital 'S.' And the biggest reason of all: the kids love Joe Madureira with a passion normally reserved for Slurpees and snow days. Trust us, this issue will be stickin' around awhile. **LAST MONTH: NOT RATED (N.R.)**

2 KISS: THE PSYCHO CIRCUS #1

WRITER: Brian Holguin
ARTISTS: Angel Medina and Kevin Conrad

Most circuses have a half-drugged elephant, warm soda and a couple of monkeys ridin' tricycles. Big friggin' whoop. The KISS guys weren't content with the state of this once-proud form of American entertainment, though. Their solution: A PSYCHO circus! Tack the word "psycho" on an innocent word like "circus," and it's instant bucks, folks. *KISS: The Psycho Circus* #1 has been ridin' high since its release. Now, who's up for Psycho Ewoks? **LAST MONTH: 1**

3 CLERKS #1

WRITER: Kevin Smith
ARTIST: Jim Mahfood

There's little doubt that Kevin Smith is the hottest name in comics these days. The writer/director of flicks like "Chasing Amy" and "Clerks," wrote this black-and-white one-shot from Oni Press, and it's doin' even better business than Smith's "Mallrats." Which, come to think about it, ain't sayin' much. **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

4 WITCHBLADE #1

WRITERS: D. Wohl, B. Haberlin and Christina Z.
ARTISTS: Michael Turner and D-Tron

Want to know the two quickest ways to get Sara Pezzini to beat your ass? The first is to snap your fingers at her and say, "Fetch me a beer, baby." The second is to tell her the following joke: "What do you call Sara Pezzini at the beach? A *sand*-Witchblade!" Trust us, the last thing you'll remember is the taste of your own blood. **LAST MONTH: 6**

5 UNCANNY X-MEN #350

WRITER: Steven T. Seagle
ARTISTS: J. Madureira, A. Smith, T. Townsend, V. Russell and D. Panosian

The X-Men finally showed Gambit the door. Gambit certainly was "cool" and "mysterious," but any way you slice it, he was still a weird-eyed guy who chucked playing cards at people. Plus, he tricked Jubilee with that "52 pickup" game once too often. **LAST MONTH: 2**

6 ONI DOUBLE FEATURE #1

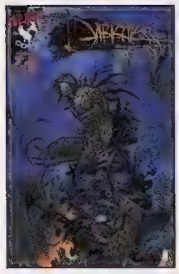
WRITERS: K. Smith and A. and J. Pander
ARTISTS: M. Wagner and the Pander brothers

Need more proof that Kevin Smith is comics' golden boy? Here ya go. This comic's basically about a couple stoned guys who encounter a dog with a gigantic...umm..."li'l Rover." Should Smith's run on *Daredevil* involve a stoned Hornhead chasing around a rotund crimelord sportin' huge wood, expect Smith's comics career to cool. **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

7 JLA #1

WRITER: Grant Morrison
ARTISTS: Howard Porter and John Dell

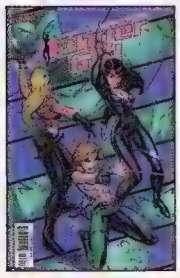
Martian Manhunter must be pretty darn jealous of his fellow Leaguers. After all, every single one of the JLA in issue #1 also has his very own solo title. 'Cept J'onn J'onzz. We'd say he's very likely green with envy, except that would probably cause *Wizard* fans to cancel their subscriptions with disgust. **LAST MONTH: 3**



8 THE DARKNESS #1

WRITER: Garth Ennis
ARTISTS: Marc Silvestri and Batt

What's in a name? Well, a power like the Darkness makes you shake in your boots. If Jackie Estacado's mystic weapon was called, say, Flower Fanny Power, you simply wouldn't have the same respect for it. You might even giggle. And you can be damn sure its comic book wouldn't still be burnin' up our Top 10 chart. **LAST MONTH: 5**



9 DANGER GIRL #1

WRITERS: J. Scott Campbell and Andy Hartnell
ARTISTS: J. Scott Campbell and Alex Garner

This blockbuster Cliffhanger debut continues its back-market heat, astonishing those who read the first draft of Campbell and Hartnell's script. Originally, Danger Girl had a groundhog sidekick named Penfold and battled a giant, ornery frog in a business suit. It kinda sucked. **LAST MONTH: 10**

10 THE AVENGERS #1

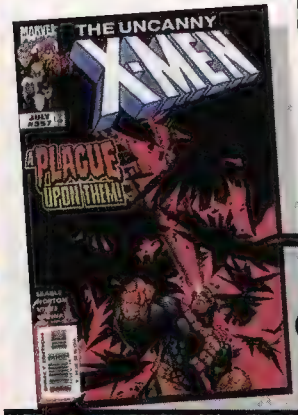
WRITER: Kurt Busiek
ARTISTS: George Pérez and Al Vey

Sure, *Avengers* is experiencing a renaissance, what with Busiek writin' and Pérez pencilin', but what the heck are these heroes actually *avenging*? They're noble and all, so they're probably just avenging evil deeds in general. But a better title might be *Ass-Stompers of Bad Guys*. Think about it, Busiek. **LAST MONTH: 7**

THE HIGHEST-ORDERED BOOKS FOR THE MONTH OF **MAY**

TOP100

Compiled by the *Wizard* Price Guide staff, and working off the data supplied by Diamond Comic Distributors.



Despite a guest artist, *Uncanny X-Men* #357 still enjoyed huge sales.

1. Uncanny X-Men #357 (Marvel)
2. X-Men #77 (Marvel)
3. Thor #1 (Marvel)
4. Spawn #74 (Todd McFarlane/Image)
5. Avengers #6 (Marvel)
6. Wolverine #126 (Marvel)
7. Fantastic Four #7 (Marvel)
8. JLA #20 (DC)
9. Captain America #7 (Marvel)
10. Iron Man #6 (Marvel)
11. Green Lantern #100 (DC)
12. Witchblade #23 (Top Cow/Image)
13. The Darkness #15 (Top Cow/Image)
14. Spirit of the Tao #1 (Top Cow/Image)
15. Crimson #1 (Cliffhanger/Image)
16. Curse of the Spawn #21 (Todd McFarlane/Image)
17. Generation X #40 (Marvel)
18. JLA: Year One #7 (DC)
19. Incredible Hulk #466 (Marvel)
20. Amazing Spider-Man #436 (Marvel)
21. X-Force #79 (Marvel)
22. Tales of the Darkness #2 (Top Cow/Image)
23. X-Factor #147 (Marvel)
24. Battle Chasers #2 (Cliffhanger/Image)
25. X-Man #40 (Marvel)
26. Peter Parker: Spider-Man #93 (Marvel)
27. Cable #56 (Marvel)
28. Spectacular Spider-Man #259 (Marvel)
29. Sensational Spider-Man #29 (Marvel)
30. Ascension #7 (Top Cow/Image)
31. Gen^{13} #29 (WildStorm/Image)
32. JLA 80-Page Giant #1 (DC)
33. Superman #136 (DC)
34. Action Comics #746 (DC)
35. Adventures of Superman #559 (DC)
36. KISS: The Psycho Circus #10 (Todd McFarlane/Image)
37. Superman: The Man of Steel #81 (DC)
38. Thunderbolts #16 (Marvel)
39. Batman #556 (DC)
40. JLA: Tomorrow Woman #1 (DC)
41. Excalibur #122 (Marvel)
42. 300 #1 (Dark Horse)
43. Detective Comics #723 (DC)
44. Astro City #15 (Homage/Image)
45. Batman: Batgirl #1 (DC)
46. Nightwing #22 (DC)
47. Alpha Flight #12 (Marvel)
48. Preacher #39 (Vertigo/DC)
49. Deadpool #18 (Marvel)
50. Superman: Lois Lane #1 (DC)
51. Robin #55 (DC)
52. Star Wars: Crimson Empire #6 (Dark Horse)
53. Flash #139 (DC)
54. Batman: Shadow of the Bat #76 (DC)
55. Marvel Universe #2 (Marvel)
56. Young Justice: The Secret #1 (DC)
57. Jim Lee's C•23 #2 (WildStorm/Image)
58. Wonder Woman: Donna Troy #1 (DC)
59. Nightwing and Huntress #3 (DC)
60. Wonder Woman #135 (DC)
61. X-Files #40 (Topps)
62. Catwoman #59 (DC)
63. Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight #108 (DC)
64. Supergirl #23 (DC)
65. The Tenth #9 (Image)
66. Lady Death #5 (Chaos!)
67. Birds of Prey: The Ravens #1 (DC)
68. Marvel Annual '98: Spider-Man & Devil Dinosaur (Marvel)
69. Starman: The Mist #1 (DC)
70. Green Lantern Secret Files #1 (DC)
71. Iron Fist #1 (Marvel)
72. Coven #8 (Awesome)
73. Gen^{12} #4 (WildStorm/Image)
74. What If? #110 (Marvel)
75. S.W.: Shadows of the Empire—Evolution #4 (Dark Horse)
76. Marvel Annual '98: Deadpool & Death (Marvel)
77. Green Arrow #134 (DC)
78. Heroes For Hire #13 (Marvel)
79. Legends of the DC Universe #6 (DC)
80. Batman Chronicles #13 (DC)
81. Starman #44 (DC)
82. Silver Surfer #141 (Marvel)
83. Avengers Rough Cut #1 (Marvel)
84. Xena: Warrior Princess—Blood Lines #1 (Topps)
85. Gen^{13} Bootleg #18 (WildStorm/Image)
86. Ka-Zar #15 (Marvel)
87. Xena: Warrior Princess—Orpheus #3 (Topps)
88. Teen Titans #22 (DC)
89. Aquaman #46 (DC)
90. Green Lantern 1963 Annual #1 (DC)
91. WildC.A.T.s #49 (WildStorm/Image)
92. Azrael #43 (DC)
93. S. W.: X-Wing Rogue Sqdrn.—Masquerade #3 (Dark Horse)
94. Daredevil #377 (Marvel)
95. Batman: Gordon of Gotham #2 (DC)
96. Superboy #53 (DC)
97. Hitman #28 (DC)
98. Maverick #11 (Marvel)
99. DV8 #18 (WildStorm/Image)
100. Books of Magic #50 (Vertigo/DC)

TOP 100 HIGHLIGHTS

MIGHTY IS THOR!

Thor #1 (No. 3)
Verily, sales of the #1 issue of the noble Odinson's new title soared as high as the golden spires of Asgard itself. The saga crafted by humble scribe Dan Jurgens (*Superman*) and esteemed pencil-artisan John Romita Jr. (*Peter Parker: Spider-Man*) was deemed honorable by god and mortal alike. This assemblage of talent should keep the Thunder God's sales as boisterous as the serving wenches of Valhalla themselves.

Green Lantern #100 and Green Lantern 1963 Annual #1 (Nos. 11, 90)
For your typical anniversary hoo-hah, a sales spike of 30-40 percent is common. But the return of a time-stranded Hal Jordan power-ringed *Green Lantern* #100 sales up a whopping *75 percent*! And *Green Lantern 1963 Annual*–a collection of Jordan reprints–also ranked. Don't be shocked if DC starts a new ongoing Hal Jordan *Green Lantern* series.

Spirit of the Tao #1 (No. 14)
Spirit of the Who-the-what? Doesn't matter. Follow the pattern here: It's a new #1 issue and it's more milk from the udder of Top Cow. Therefore, it's *supposed* to be a hit. This tale of two descendants of a force called the Tao ranks right behind the Cow's top-selling *Witchblade* and *The Darkness*.

Crimson #1 (No. 15)
The vampire-filled *Crimson* comes to life, boosted by fellow Cliffhanger books *Danger Girl* and *Battle Chasers*. Both were instant sellouts, so retailers upped their orders for *Crimson*'s debut. Oh, yeah–*Crimson* also had a Chromium-covered edition that would have ranked No. 59, but since it was limited to only 5,000 copies, it was taken off the list.

'Girlfrenzy' books (Nos. 40, 45, 50, 56, 58, 67, 69)
Hello, estrogen! Notice how DC's female-themed books fell in rank according to popularity of their parent titles. So the more obscure Tomorrow Woman from *JLA* outflew the more household-name Batgirl.

300 #1 (No. 42)
A completely unproven property, *300* proves that the Frank Miller (*Sin City*) war machine still sells comics. This story about a doomed party of Spartan warriors during the Persian War sells big based on Miller's name alone.

Green Arrow #134 (No. 77)
Pull a stunt and *Green Arrow* has more spring than a longbow. Last month's JLA crossover pushed the usually sub-100 *Green Arrow* to No. 91, and this month's "Brotherhood of the Fist" crossover with the Batman titles hits the bullseye again.

CLOSE-UP LOOK

Break it on down now! Here's a look at the top-selling books in a couple of categories, with their overall Diamond Comics Distributors "Top 300" rankings in parentheses.

TUFF ENOUGH Preacher Jesse Custer tops the Vertigo heap.

TOP 10 VERTIGO/DC BOOKS

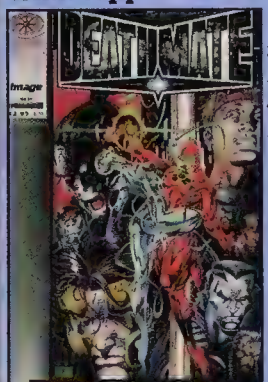
1. Preacher #39 (No. 48)
2. Books of Magic #50 (No. 100)
3. The Dreaming #26 (No. 107)
4. Gangland #2 (No. 123)
5. Nevada #3 (No. 132)
6. The Dreaming: Trial and Error (No. 135)
7. Hellblazer #127 (No. 145)
8. House of Secrets #21 (No. 152)
9. Sandman Mystery Theatre #63 (No. 153)
10. Welcome Back to the House of Mystery (No. 154)

TOP 10 MINI-SERIES BOOKS

1. JLA: Year One #7 (DC, No. 18)
2. 300 #1 (Dark Horse, No. 42)
3. Star Wars: Crimson Empire #6 (Dark Horse, No. 52)
4. Nightwing and Huntress #3 (DC, No. 59)
5. Iron Fist #1 (Marvel, No. 71)
6. Gen^{12} #4 (WildStorm/Image, No. 73)
7. S.W.: Shadows of the Empire—Evolution #4 (Dark Horse, No. 75)
8. Xena: Warrior Princess—Blood Lines #1 (Topps, No. 84)
9. Xena: Warrior Princess—Orpheus #3 (Topps, No. 87)
10. Batman: Gordon of Gotham #2 (DC, No. 95)

LOOKING BACK

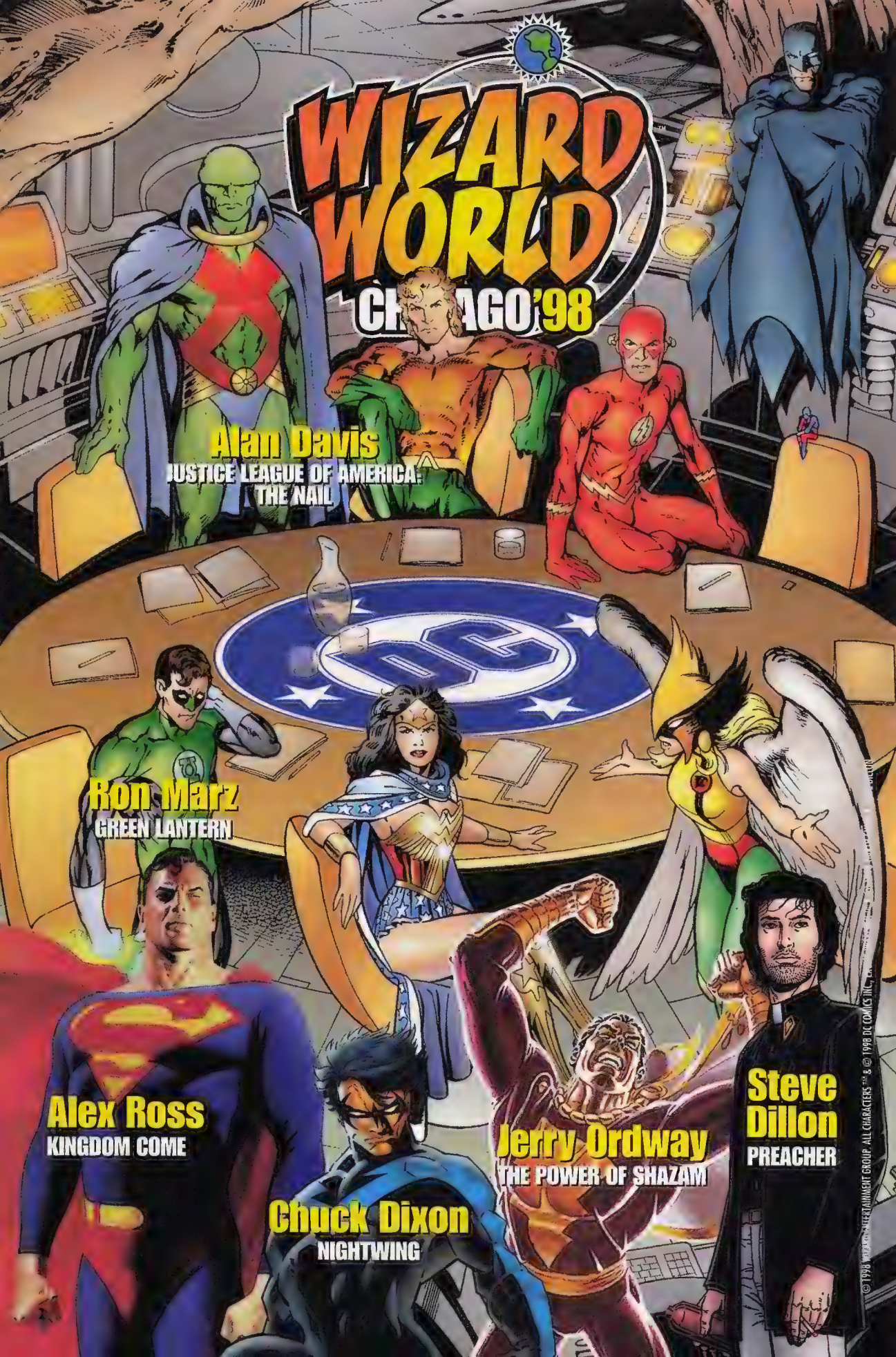
What topped the charts FIVE YEARS AGO?



D'OH! *Deathmate Prologue* launched comics' most disappointing crossover.

1. Deathmate Prologue (Valiant)
2. Spawn #14 (Image)
3. Shadowhawk II: Secret Revealed #2 (Image)
4. CyberForce #0 (Image)
5. Sabretooth #1 (Marvel)
6. Savage Dragon #1 (Image)
7. Union #1 (Image)
8. Doom's IV #1 (Image)
9. Secret Weapons #1 (Valiant)
10. X-Force #25 (Marvel)

The top-selling *Deathmate Prologue* kicked off a crossover between then-wildfire publishers Image and Valiant. But massive deadline screw-ups meant that the story's fifth chapter, *Deathmate Red*, actually shipped *after* the story's sixth and final chapter, *Deathmate Epilogue*. It was supposed to be the greatest crossover ever. Instead, *Deathmate* disproved the old saying. Sometimes it's better *never* than late.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THE POWER OF SHAZAM
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CHICAGO '98
July 17-19, 1998
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C.B.I.Q.

YOU THINK YOU'RE SO SMART...

COMIC BOOK INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENT

Public restrooms are pretty skeevy. They're crawlin' with bacteria, inconsiderate souls whiz on the toilet seats and you have to flush with your foot so you don't get some sort of rare South American skin disease. This month, we'll rate your comic book knowledge against the sounds you least want to hear coming from the stall next to you.

SCORE	RANK
0-4	*"What the...BLOOD?!?"*
5-9	*"I cannnn seeeeee youuuuuuu..."*
10-14	*"No sense in wasting good corn!"*
15	*"I used to be in 'WHAM!', y'know."*

1 What brand of Scotch was the evil MacLeish always drinking in the recent "Not Dead Yet" storyline in Wolverine #120-#123?
A) Johnnie Walker Red
B) Johnnie Walker Black
C) Dewar's
D) White Castle

2 Before she turned to a life of crime, the Joker's gal-pal Harley Quinn had a career in which field?
A) psychology
B) medicine
C) law
D) turning on pre-pubescent boys and making them feel "funny" whenever they saw her prancing about

3 How did the Flaming Carrot become the Flaming Carrot?
A) He was bitten by a radioactive carrot.
B) He was caught in the explosion of a carrot bomb.
C) He saw his parents murdered before his eyes and vowed revenge on criminals, dressing up as a carrot as an instrument of terror because "criminals are a cowardly, superstitious lot."
D) He just read too damn many comics and went loopy. Honest.

4 In addition to the super-soldier serum, Captain America has the blood of which supervillain coursing through his veins?
A) Dr. Faustus
B) Citizen V (whom Cap didn't know was really Baron Zemo)
C) The Red Skull
D) The Grape Smuggler

5 That funky Allfather from Preacher was large and in charge–but he suffered from which eating disorder?
A) bulimia
B) anorexia
C) gingivitis
D) fever for the flavor of a Pringles

6 Those kids in Marvel's Generation X sure are hip and alternative–so what was the name of their recent hip, alternative, black and white one-shot?
A) *Generation X Unplugged*
B) *Generation X-Posed*
C) *Generation X Underground*
D) *Generation X: Yet Another Ancillary X-book That Contributes Nothing*

7 Which of the following is not a famed Olympic athlete and is, in fact, a nasty-bad villainess in the WildStorm Universe?
A) Ivana Baiul
B) Oksana Baiul
C) Olga Korbut
D) Nadia Comeneci

8 Who HASN'T worn the Iron Man armor?
A) Pepper Potts
B) James Rhodes
C) Bethany Cabe
D) Happy Hogan

9 That cuddly li'l dragon from *Leave It to Chance* sure is...er, cuddly. What was his name again?
A) St. George
B) Lockheed
C) Firebringer
D) Godzooky

10 How much does a Scud cost in *Scud: The Disposable Assassin*?
A) $1.98
B) Your soul
C) Three Franks
D) $1,000,000

11 Sam Raimi's brother is so damn spoiled. Not only does he appear in most of his director sibling's TV and movie productions, he also appears in the Xena comic book as:
A) Aries
B) Callisto
C) Joxer
D) Chachi

12 Who supplied that purple fink Sinestro with his yellow power ring?
A) The rogue Guardian Ganthet
B) The Weaponers of Qward
C) Lex Luthor
D) That little half-a-sissy sailor kid from the Cracker Jacks box.

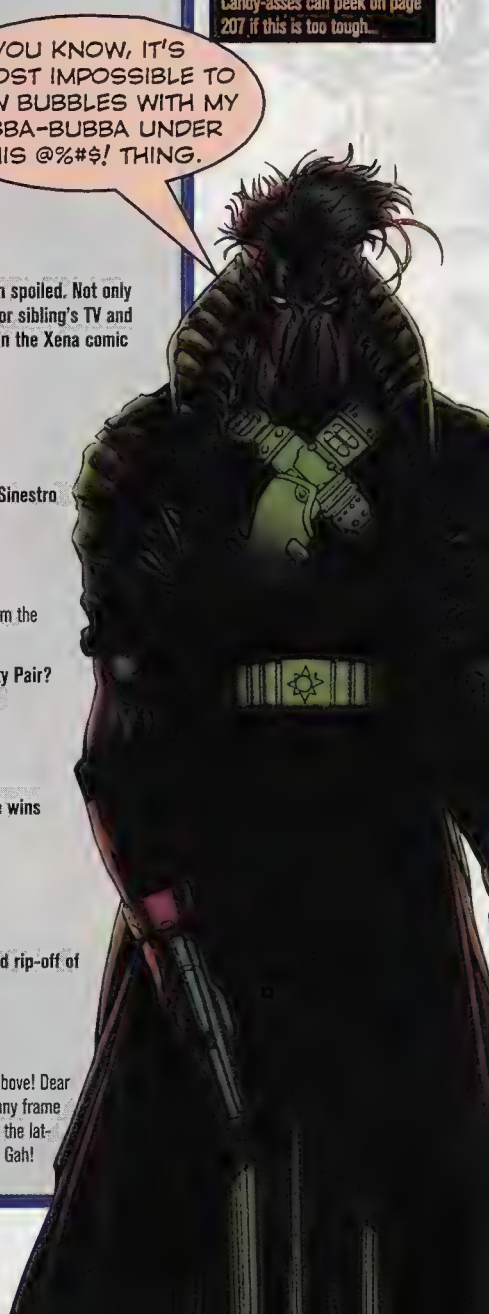
13 What are the names of the Dirty Pair?
A) Masuna and Keri
B) Breena and Glori
C) Kei and Turi
D) Chow & Yung Fat

14 Savage Dragon baddie Backfire wins battles by blasting foes with:
A) flatulence
B) bile
C) fecal matter
D) pie

15 *Danger Girl* is a highly contrived rip-off of what popular movie or TV property?
A) the James Bond films
B) "Charlie's Angels"
C) "Get Smart"
D) Hey! Whatta bonus...it's all of the above! Dear God, some creators today don't have any frame of reference outside of syndicated TV, the latest action flick or other comic books!! Gah!

ANSWERS

Candy-asses can peek on page 207 if this is too tough...



BULLPEN LOOK BEHIND THE CURTAIN

The Culinary Apocalypse

It began in Wizard #81.

That's when senior staff writer Jim McLauchlin interviewed artist Adam Kubert at a White Castle hamburger joint (home of the infamous bite-sized "sliders," named after how the li'l buggers exit your body). After the interview, the two had a White Castle eat-off where McLauchlin won by downing...nine. That's it, a measly nine burgers. Harassed by his co-workers for his lackluster performance, and besieged by fans writing in and calling him a wuss, McLauchlin–answering the challenge put before him–loosened his belt and once more stepped through the Castle doors. This time around he faced Wizard Entertainment staffers Brent "Feed me!" Fishbaugh, Greg "Orifice" Orlando, James "Mouth Watering" Walker, Pat "More!" McCallum, Paul "Salivating" Sudlow and Tom "Ravenous" Root. And the winner of the greasy spectacle? At an astounding TWENTY White Castle burgers (and two large Sprites) the winner and undisputed White Castle Cham-peen of the World...Jim "Mincemeat" McLauchlin! "To paraphrase that Titanic guy, 'I'm the King of Beef!' " a disturbingly pale McLauchlin commented after the bout. "Now leave me alone so I can go into convulsions."

ALMOST MEAT! Peaked and ashen *Wizard* staffer Jim McLauchlin shows them sliders who's boss.

TOP10 attractions at this year's Wizard World Chicago Comic Con

10 "Wheel of Bankruptcy!" One lucky winner will walk away the new owner of Marvel Entertainment!
9 Joel Schumacher's "How to Kill a Franchise" seminar (free eggs to the first 100 fanboys on line).
8 Combustible spokesmodel-off! We'll take spokesmodels dressed as the Hulk, Batman and Spawn and sit 'em under 500-watt bulbs for an hour and see who pops first!
7 Comic-fan skeet-shooting...."PULL!"
6 Micronauts live-action role-playing! (Just kidding. Go home, losers.)
5 The "Guess what the hell Wolverine #125 was about" question and answer period. Winner takes home Chris Claremont!
4 "Feeding Frenzy Fun!" Pull an *Uncanny X-Men* #266 out of your jacket at the quarter bins and yell, "Wow...the first Gambit for only a quarter?!?" Contestant who incites the bloodiest stampede wins!
3 Fan who does the most push-ups wins job as "Vampirella Model thong-washer for a day." Watch and giggle as thousands of fanboy's hearts explode around push-up six!
2 Mud-wrestling with Brother Power the Greek (and no, that's not a typo).
1 Garth Ennis' Children's Hour! Watch as the master of disturbing plot devices offers his take on Dr. Seuss classics: "Green Eggs and the Acne Sore Full of Baby Spiders" and "Yertle the Turtle Who Craved Human Flesh."

CBIQ answers...

1. D 2. A 3. D 4. C 5. A 6. C 7. A 8. A 9. A 10. C 11. C 12. B 13. C 14. A 15. D

ONE OF THE DAMNED

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MOST BIZARRE *WIZARD* MOMENT: "After scoring the winning point for the foosball all-star game, *InQuest* Managing Editor Tom Slizewski was so happy, he picked me up and hugged me. I was a little shocked, but it was funny."

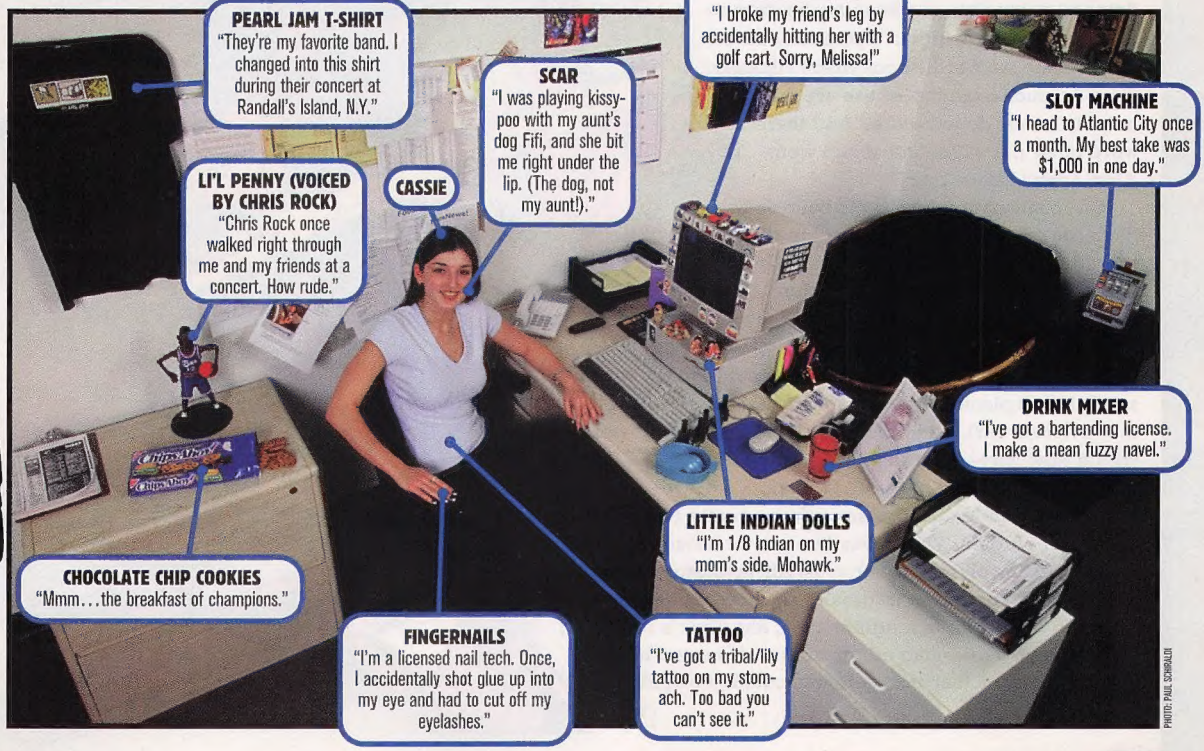


PHOTO: PAUL SCHRADER

TIME TRAVEL by TOM RUSSO

'FANTASTIC' VOYAGE

John Byrne sent Marvel's 'First Family' on a characteristic journey 17 years ago

Talk about understated. When *Fantastic Four* #232 hit the stands in 1981, there wasn't a single blurb anywhere on the cover—just the shadowy image of Diablo working some arcane nastiness on our unsuspecting heroes. Even the usual tagline—"The World's Greatest Comic Magazine!"—was missing. There was nothing, in short, to trumpet this as the start of writer/artist John Byrne's standout five-year run on the book. But then, the title on the splash page pretty much said it all: "Back to the Basics!"

Byrne's arrival on *FF* certainly marked a return to the compelling, character-driven storytelling of the book's early days. The issue's plot was fairly standard: Diablo sicced a quartet of demons on the team, exploiting the FF's individual limitations. The FF, of course, eventually united to overcome the threat—but not before Byrne systematically climbed inside each hero's separate little world.

The book's original feel returned so swiftly, it's hard to imagine there was ever any doubt Byrne could pull it off. But while sweeping revitalizations have become his trademark over the years—e.g. DC's Superman books or Marvel's upcoming *Spider-Man: Twice Told Tales*—his *FF* stint was the first time he'd undertaken such a task. And while he had co-plotted many of the stories he had penciled on *Uncanny X-Men*, he was new to the writer/artist game. "An awful lot of stuff was dropped on my plate, and there was this tremendous sense of stage fright," Byrne remembers. "There were parts of the book where I thought, 'Boy, I'm such a genius—these are things nobody's ever done before.' And there were other parts I looked at and went, 'God, I don't have a clue.'"

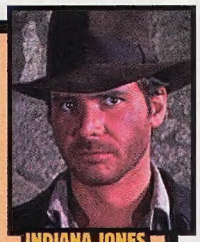
One of the genius bits was to build up Sue Richards' character from damsel in distress into the kind of strong, single-minded heroine that's become another Byrne signature. "Sue was the one beckoning me and saying, 'Give me a personality. Give me something I can do,'" he says. Looking back at that initial issue, you can already see the seeds being planted: The story's first action sequence starred the Invisible Girl, and she cleverly utilized her powers in a whole new way—as transportation. By issue #284, Byrne rechristened her the Invisible Woman.

Byrne's run featured many other equally memorable character studies. There was Sue's miscarriage. Johnny Storm's first involvement with artist Alicia Masters. Johnny's guilt after a young fan tragically tried emulating him by "flaming on." And, in a lighter vein, She-Hulk's revealing run-in with a nudie-mag editor. And it all started here, in *FF* #232—a book that most certainly couldn't be judged by its cover.

DATELINE

JULY 1981

Moviegoers had no trouble finding Steven Spielberg's **"Raiders of the Lost Ark."**...Saturday nights, TV viewers set a course for ABC's **"The Love Boat."**...Kim Carnes looked good on *Billboard's* charts with her smash hit **"Bette Davis Eyes."**...Roughly 700 million people worldwide tuned in to watch Prince Charles marry **Lady Diana** at St. Paul's cathedral in London.



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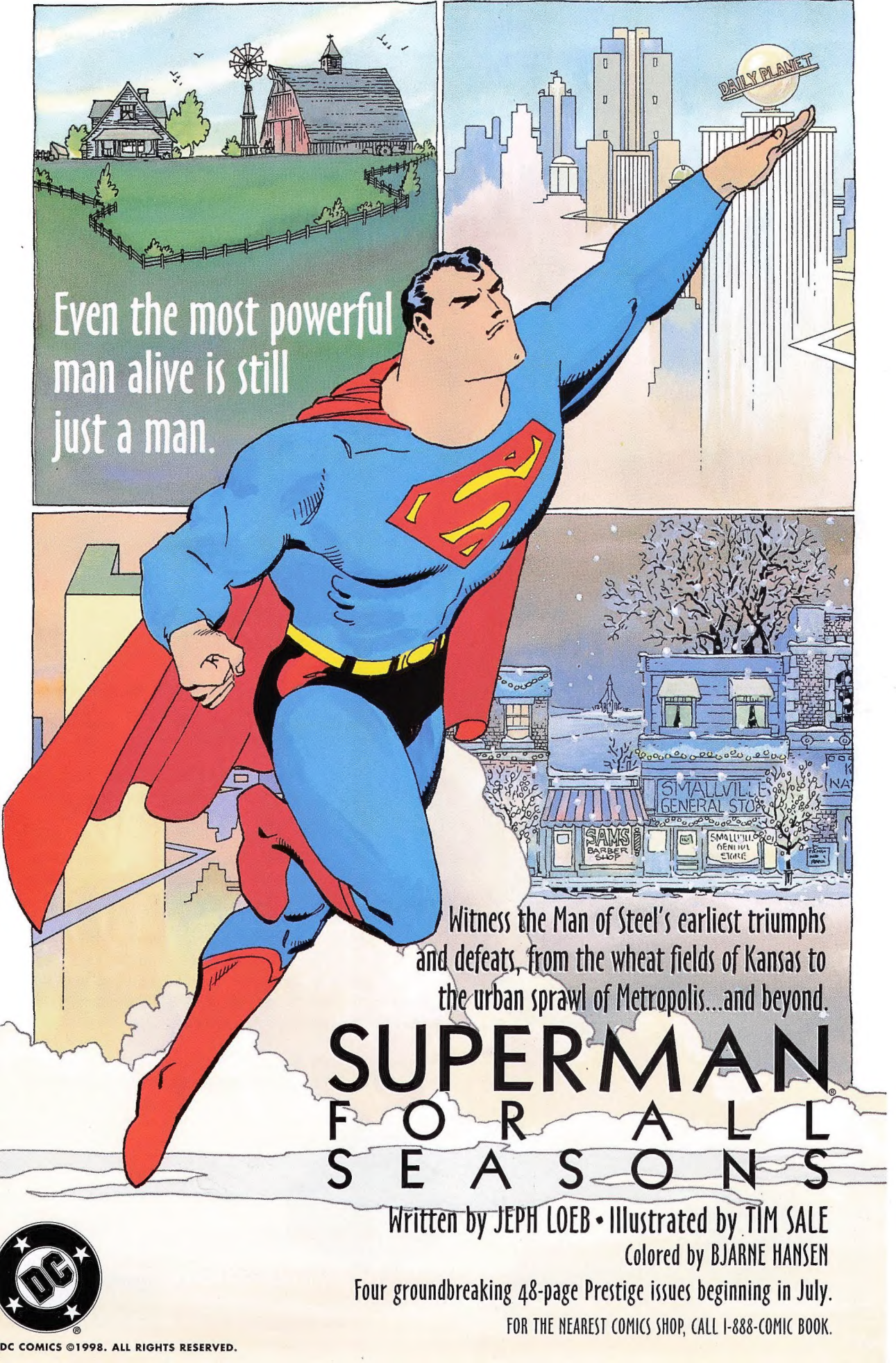

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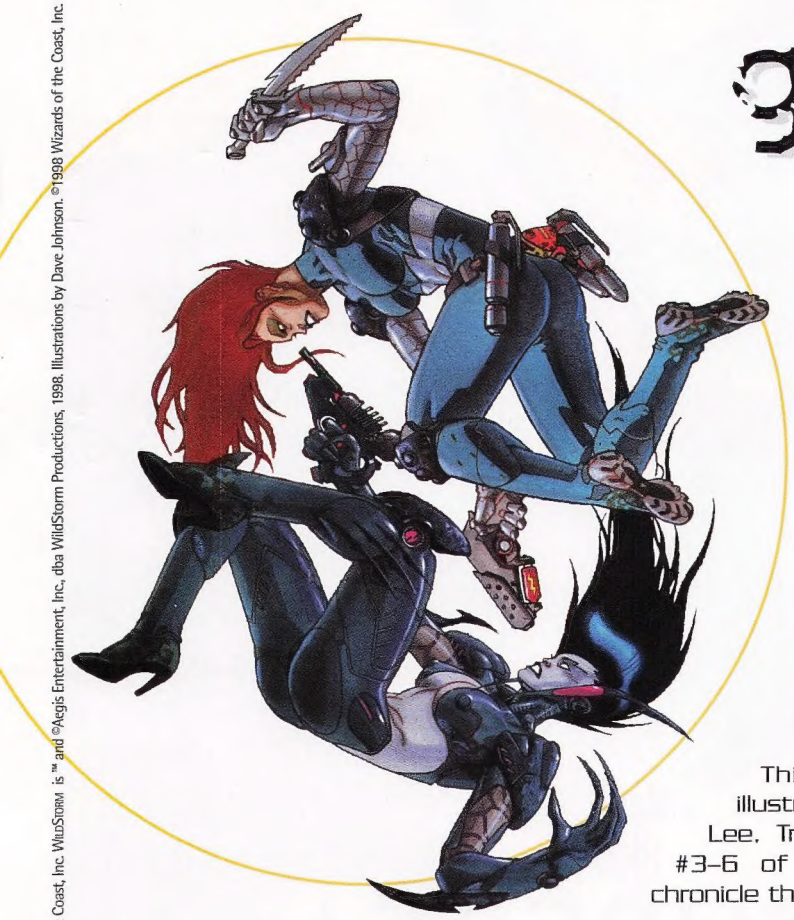
a world divided.

a terrifying war.

2 angry chicks with guns.



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